THE MISSIONARY CONTENT OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEOLOGY

by

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PREFACE

The writer has been interested in the Christian missionary enterprise for a number of years. One area of mission literature in which he has noticed a marked neglect has been that of the theology of missions. Very few complete books by American theologians have been devoted to the task of stating the theological basis for Christian missions. Very few articles, also, have been contributed by American writers to scholarly religious journals with the purpose of defining the areas of theological thought pertinent to the missionary task.

A number of topics fundamental to a theology of mission, however, have been discussed in scholarly articles and books, and, in many instances, direct reference has been made to the pertinence of these subjects to the missionary enterprise.

In general, the writer of this study has not tried to cover the field of all writing on topics which he has felt to be pertinent to a theology of missions, but has limited his survey of material to those instances in which the authors have made application of their thought to mission problems. Two notable exceptions have been made to this rule. He has sought to apply the systems of thought of Nels F. S. Ferré and Paul Tillich to the problems involved in missionary theology on the ground that these men represent theological positions not defined by the usual categories of fundamental, liberal, or neo-orthodox theology, and on the ground that these theologians have expressed definite interest in the missionary enterprise.

An apparently disproportionate amount of material has been drawn from the scholarly journals. The choice of using this materials was made, first of all, by necessity. A full account of the missionary content of American theology could not be made by a primary use of books on theology. A more basic reason, however, for the large use made of articles contributed to scholarly religious journals has been the writer's conviction that the cutting edge of theological thinking in America is found in the journals.

There is a noticeable neglect of Roman Catholic theology in this study. The choice not to explore this field has been made deliberately on the basis that missions conducted by the Roman Catholic Church have to be founded on a theological basis consistent with the absolutely authoritarian basis of Roman Catholicism. While there would be a considerably wider latitude in Roman Catholicism with its reliance on tradition, the writings of the Church Fathers, as well as the Bible, its inner logic makes the same demands which are made by Protestant fundamentalism. For Catholicism, the final authority over the several strands of authority is the Church. For fundamentalism, the final authority is the Bible interpreted with legalistic literalism.

A definite date of beginning had to be fixed for this study in order to keep from pushing further and further back into the past. The date of the publication of Re-thinking Missions has been chosen because of the monumental nature of the study of the missionary enterprise which it represents. Therefore, this study begins with the year 1932.

Such a study could not be made without some evaluation of the material presented, and an evaluation which does not reflect the theological prespective of the writer is impossible. In order that the readers of this study might have at least an indication of the author's theological perspective, he has included a chapter entitled, "Elements in a Theology of Missions." This chapter has also served to define his concept of the field of missionary theology.

The study has been rewarding to the writer, not only for his increased understanding of American thinking on an enterprise which has challenged the American churches to contribute large amounts of material resources and much valuable manpower, but also for his increased understanding of some of the major trends of theological thought in this era characterized by rapid social and political changes on the American scene, and an era which the whole world has found fraught with the dangers of economic depression, social revolution, and war (hot and cold).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Ecumenical Missionary Conferences

The meetings of the great ecumenical missionary conferences have provided the background and the stimulus for much of the theological discussion of the Christian missionary enterprise. These conferences have not been primarily concerned with discovering a theological basis for Christian missions, but their formulation of the missionary message and task has been based on presuppositions of interest to those who are concerned with the theology of missions.

A brief review of these conferences is not necessary to the task of discovering the missionary content of contemporary American theology, but it is necessary for understanding a part of the "Christian atmosphere" in which American theologians lived as they addressed themselves to problems made pertinent by the missionary enterprise.

Edinburg, 1910

The significance of The World Missionary Conference, June 14-23, 1910, was not in its findings but in the seeds of ecumenicity which were sown there. Out of this conference came, either directly or indirectly, The Universal Christian

Council for Life and Work, the Faith and Order Movement, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Churches. The spirit of world-wide cooperation among Christian Churches of widely diverse theological positions and ecclesiastical organization set the pattern for ecumenical thinking and action. The conference also afforded invaluable training for ecumenical leadership for several persons whose life and influence have counted much for Christian unity in the twentieth century.

Due to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, many of the values which might have been immediately gained were lost. Yet, the pattern for the world responsibility of the Christian Churches was set and some organizational machinery was set in motion at Edinburg that proved of inestimable worth during the war years.

The Jerusalem Conference, 1928

There were marked differences between The World Missionary Conference, Edinburg, 1910, and the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Conference, 1928. The most notable was the difference in constituency. At the Jerusalem Conference fifty per cent of the delegates represented the younger churches, while at Edinburg the ratio was less than one in fifty.[1] This fact represented the rise of the truly world-wide church with a leadership in the area known as the missionary lands capable of taking its place in the great councils of the Christian faith. A second difference concerned the emphasis which Jerusalem gave to the statement of the Christian message. The Christian message had been largely taken for granted at Edinburg, but at Jerusalem it received primary emphasis. A third difference between the conferences concerned the emphasis which Jerusalem gave to the social responsibility of Christians. The voice of the social Gospel was quiet at Edinburg, but was sounded with clarity at Jerusalem.[2]

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[1] The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24-April 8, 1928 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), VIII, 12. (Hereafter referred to as Jerusalem, 1928.)

The Christian message was summarized for adoption by the whole conference by William Temple and Robert E. Speer.[3] The task of stating the Christian message in terms acceptable to the widely divergent groups composing the conference seemed impossible. The German delegation joined by most Continental theologians strongly objected to the pre-conference studies.[4]

The message had to express the true Christian faith, and it had to do so in terms acceptable to the two general theological groups.

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[2] William Richey Hogg, Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 250, 251.

[3] Ibid., p. 248.

[4] Ibid.

> One emphasized exclusively the gospel's uniqueness, maintaining that the convert must renounce completely his former system of religious belief and any practice associated with it. The other, appealing to the comparative study of religions, saw elements of value in non-Christian religions and viewed Christianity as the fulfillment of some truths already possessed in part by other faiths. The line between the two positions fairly well divided Continentals from Anglo-Saxons. Agreement upon a statement of the message seemed well nigh impossible.[5]

The above statement by Dr. Hogg describes the context in which the Jerusalem Conference made its statement of the Christian message. The message itself can be summarized by quoting one of its paragraphs.

> Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him may become. In Him we come face to face with the Ultimate Reality of the universe; He makes known to us God as our Father, perfect and infinite in love and in righteousness; for in Him we find God incarnate, the final, yet ever-unfolding, revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being.[6]

The message is further summarized in the often quoted phrase, "Our message is Jesus Christ."

The statement of the message in itself represents a masterful triumph, for it was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted. The breech of unity was not healed, however, and the division which was real at Jerusalem is still real. Groups more theologically conservative than the German delegation, and yet zealously missionary in spirit, were not represented at Jerusalem. These were the faith and independent mission boards.[7]

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[5] Ibid., p. 247. For a summary of views held by the Continental delegates, see Jerusalem, 1928, I, 345-348.

[6] Jerusalem, 1928, I, 402.

It should be noted that the spirit of the "message" accepted at Jerusalem adhered to traditional Christian faith, but it was stated in language of theological liberalism. This is the genius of the "message," and explains why it was unanimously adopted. This in itself is, of course, a notable and valuable accomplishment and perhaps points the way for larger areas of agreement in the future. This method supplies a focal point of agreement to allow time for adjustments and readjustments of theological positions.

On the whole one gets the impression that confidence and enthusiasm were prevailing attitudes at Jerusalem. These attitudes should be congenial to the missionary spirit. One is impressed further with the willingness of the delegates at Jerusalem to face issues openly and honestly. As important as these attitudes are, they are not adequate if the ability to read the signs of the times is lacking. At this point there are three observations to be made. First, a tremendous contribution was made when the threat of secularism was faced for the multiple-headed menace that it is to mankind. Second, a more comprehensive theological basis should have been sought to prepare the Christian churches for the onslaught of the diabolical philosophical and political isms that secularism unleashed in the world. Third, the astute leaders of the conference failed to see the impending disaster of world-wide economic depression which was just ahead and which nullified much of the constructive planning by the conference.[8]

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[7] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 24.

The American Contributions to the Conference

A glance through the names of the American delegation at Jerusalem will reveal several names to be seen again in this study: Ralph E. Diffendorfer, Robert E. Speer, Samuel M. Zwemer, William Ernest Hocking, and John A. Mackay. There were also other Americans present who represented other areas of the world as missionaries to other lands.

From an administrative point of view, the work of Dr. John R. Mott was indispensable to the conference, as it has been in the development of international Christian cooperation. The work of other Americans has been valuable in developing the various areas of work essential to the missionary enterprise. Since this study is primarily concerned with the theological basis of the missionary enterprise, discussion of other and valuable areas of missionary work at Jerusalem will be by-passed.

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[8] In this failure, the missionary leaders had ample company.

One of the influential leaders at Jerusalem was the distinguished American scholar, Professor William E. Hocking. An address which he delivered at Jerusalem pointed the way to his work in connection with the Laymen's Inquiry. After defining the problems of religious faith in psychological terms, Dr. Hocking remarked, "Each of the great religions in its own way undertakes to meet the problem which we here outline."[9] The heart of the religious contribution to man is "motive-power." So far as metaphysical truth is concerned, "there is no possibility of confining the true conception of God to one religious system and shutting it out from another."[10] The ideal method by which Christianity confronts non-Christian faiths must include three phases. First, the transmission of the Christian faith to others should be accompanied by the "ideal of synthesis of religious values and (and should preserve) the loyalties of peoples to their own historic spiritual life."[11] Secondly, the humanitarian work should be done in such a manner as to cause the recipient to ask, "What is the motive of this deed of help?"[12]

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[9] Jerusalem, 1928, VIII, 120, 121.

[10] Ibid., p. 121.

[11] Ibid.

> There is a third type of contact which is relatively new and which I would call the contact of mutual intuition, that is, the contact implied in conversation; where one comes not only to teach but also to learn.[13]

Dr. Hocking, in the same address, stated the purpose of the missionary enterprise as being, "the creation of a common spiritual life among men. For it is the hope of the world that men shall not be ultimately apart in the deepest sources of their motivation."[14]

Dr. E. Stanley Jones, in speaking on "The Power of Evangelism," urged a religious certainty "in that something else which was over and beyond and other."[15] It is this certainty which the Christian must share. Dr. Jones quoted Mr. Gandhi's phrase, "Religion is so uncertain." To this he replied, "it can become so certain that we cannot help but share what we have seen in Jesus Christ our Lord."[16]

Concerning a question which greatly troubled many at Jerusalem, and a very vital part of any missionary theology, the question of the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions, Robert E. Speer wrote, "What Is the Value of the Religious Values of the Non-Christian Religions?"[17] Hendrik Kraemer was to have written the article, but was unable to do so because of ill health. This is an interesting bit of history in the light of Dr. Kraemer's decisive contribution to the later meeting of the International Council in Madras.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 132.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p. 100.

[16] Ibid., p. 103.

The question is, "In what sense are these religious values of the non-Christian religions real values in themselves and in their relationship to the missionary effort to carry the Gospel to all the world?"[18]

In answer to this question, Dr. Speer discussed five real values to be found in non-Christian religions: (1) They bear witness to spiritual needs and to "some elemental religious ideas."[19] (2) They represent a spiritual ~~approach~~ to life as opposed to secularism.[20] (3) They call attention to some of the neglected truths in Christianity.[21] (4) "They provide a meeting place of common accord."[22] (5) Insofar as they have truth, their truth "belongs to Him who said, 'I am the Truth.'"[23]

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[17] Jerusalem, 1928, I, 345-367.

[18] Ibid., p. 352.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 353.

[21] Ibid., pp. 353, 354.

[22] Ibid., p. 354.

[23] Ibid.

The real attitude of Christians to other religions according to Dr. Speer is expressed in these words: "There is no truth or good in them which is not found in a purer or fuller form in Christianity."[24] In relating this attitude to the missionary motive, he asked this question:

> If Christianity is not better than every other religion, what right have we to offer it and on what rational or defensible ground do the new churches and the faith of their members rest?"[25]

The real values of non-Christian religions stand in need of the redeeming grace of God in Christ. This is the business of Christian missions.[26]

Rufus M. Jones made a real contribution to the conference in his discussion of "Secular Civilization and the Christian Task."[27] He defined secularism to mean "a way of life and an interpretation of life that include only the natural order of things."[28] After a lengthy discussion of the origin and nature of secularism, Dr. Jones proposed the way which Christianity must travel toward a solution. The voice of the prophet needs to be raised, bearing a living witness to the certainty of his religious experience.[29] The Church needs to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in which the "frustration and futility" of life based on material possessions can be overcome.[30] The world needs a "convincing laboratory experiment of the transforming and creative power of Christianity to challenge the evidences of the collapse of civilization."[31]

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 358.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 230-273.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 230 (fn. 1).

> We must meet this secular world -- its prosperity, its smugness, its "hard-boiled" philosophy, its utilitarian aims -- with a settled conviction that we are going all the way with Christ, and with a burning passion to be like Him in life and spirit -- to be His, both to live and to die.[32]

At Jerusalem, 1928, the Christian world faces the non-Christian religions which are also attacked by secularism, and regards them as "witnesses of man's need of God and allies in our quest of perfection."[33] Dr. Jones asked that they try "the best that our religion has brought us, that they may test it for themselves."[34]

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[29] Ibid., p. 263.

[30] Ibid., p. 265.

[31] Ibid., p. 266.

[32] Ibid., p. 267.

[33] Ibid., p. 273.

[34] Ibid.

Jerusalem, 1928, and the Future

As this study progresses, it will be recognized that the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council provided the background for the theological approach to missions for many American thinkers. The "message" adopted by the Conference provided the leads for most of the denominational mission boards, and the work of Rufus M. Jones and William Ernest Hocking provided the leads for the more radical liberal religious leaders. This is not to say, of course, that these ideas were not expressed by others prior to the Easter season of 1928, but they were brought to sharp focus there in view of the whole Christian world.

Madras, 1938

The years which intervened between Jerusalem, 1928, and Madras, 1938, were intensely revolutionary and have often been described as years of crisis. During this period the prevalent approach made to the missionary problem at Jerusalem seemed to many to be more and more inadequate. The new theology of Karl Barth, therefore, began to be heard with more sympathetic ears.

The book which was prepared for pre-conference study by Hendrik Kraemer[35] was written from a theological perspective which had been greatly moulded by the theology of crisis. The book was not welcomed with open arms by American theologians, but it provided a profound challenge to them, and it still continues to be a system of missionary thought to be reckoned with.

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[35] Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938; published for the International Missionary Council).

The scope of this study does not permit an analysis of this book, but a brief description of its theological presuppositions is necessary to provide the background for the form of much American missionary thinking. They key to understanding Dr. Kraemer's position is found in his term "biblical realism." This term has been mistaken to mean a reaffirmation of the fundamentalist position on the Bible. However, the term refers to the Biblical truth that God acts in history for the redemption of man, and the Bible is the record of those sovereign acts of God. The Bible is "radically religious," "intensely ethical," and "radically theocentric."[36]

> . . . The Bible takes in a radically serious fashion the fact that God is God, that He is the Absolute Sovereign and the only rightful Lord, with all the consequences that are implied herein for the world, human life, and the position of man.[37]

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36. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

37. *Ibid.*

For Dr. Kraemer, revelation has the nature of mystery insofar as it refers to the essence of God, but is clear insofar as the will of God is made known. Therefore, revelation is always placed in the correlation of faith and obedience.[38] Because Christianity is "the religion of revelation and faith," it is a "witnessing religion."[39]

The Bible is not to be regarded in any sense as a manual of ethics, but biblical realism calls for a complete reliance upon God and a will to do His will. God is perfectly holy, and man's sinfulness is fully understood in view of God's holiness. Man's part in the drama of redemption is his repentance. That he becomes a child of God is the result of God's sovereign grace. As a child, man obeys in love. This is the radical nature of his freedom and the evidence of his redemption. Thus all legalism is transcended in Christian ethics. Dr. Kraemer applied his concept of ethics to the missionary motive in these words:

> Where is the never-dying source of inspiration and humility? In the mind of God, who willed the salvation and restoration of the world, not sparing His son, who revealed the heart of the Father in the compassion that moved His heart when He saw the multitudes as a sheep without a shepherd. The multitudes of Asia and Africa surely need this divine quality of compassion.[40]

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[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 69 and 87.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Dr. Kraemer's attitude toward non-Christian religions has also been misunderstood. His work shows a profound understanding of other religions and a warm sympathy for their adherents. Because Christianity is essentially a faith based on revelation, he has insisted that even the greatest and purest people of other religions "stand in need of conversion and regeneration as much as the 'ordinary' sinner needs it."[41] This judgement is predicated on the belief that Christ came to make all things new.[42]

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the "point of contact" in missionary literature. According to Dr. Kraemer, the missionary is the point of contact. He must find in his own personal relation the areas in which he can approach the non-Christian person. So far as basic similarities are concerned, these cannot be found. "Points of contact in the real deep sense of the word can only be found in antithesis."[43] This is true because each religion has to be viewed as a whole and not as a collection of fragmentary points. The point of contact in man's common religious quest is found in the universal sense of need of God in mankind.[44]

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[41] Ibid., p. 128.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 139.

[44] Ibid., p. 130.

The problem of syncretism in religion can be overcome, according to Dr. Kraemer, when it is realized that syncretistic practices are based on the theory of natural religion and that syncretism is therefore antithetical to revealed religion. Natural religions are founded on the proposition that "truth pertains exclusively to the sphere of absolute pure Essence. All religions therefore at their best can only be accomodated truths."[45] Christianity does not regard God simply as "pure Essence," but as the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

At Tambaram, near Madras, 471 persons from sixty-nine countries gathered to consider the missionary task of the Church. The central theme of the conference was the Church itself. "It was common ground to all that the faith, the witness and the life of the living Church all over the world lie at the very heart of the whole Christian mission."[46]

The conference faced the perennial task of defining the Christian faith in terms of "its special meaning for our time."[47] The key phrase of this statement of faith was, "We live by faith in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."[48] The statement also emphasized the sin of man, the purpose of God to save, the Incarnation, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.[49] The missionary motive of the Church was expressed in these words: "For those that are without Christ the true Church yearns with the love of its Master and Lord."[50]

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[45] Ibid., p. 209.

[46] The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938 (London: International Missionary Council, 1939), p. 7.

[47] Ibid., p. 14.

Whereas the emphasis at Jerusalem had been on Jesus Christ, the emphasis of the Madras statement of faith was on God who is the Father of Jesus Christ. This fact is significant in the light of the changing theological perspective. Jesus was not less important, but his importance was seen at Madras to be founded on his relationship with God, the Father. It is also worthy of note that the study of the Church made necessary a greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Thus, the full significance of the Trinity in missionary theology was more nearly approached at Madras than at Jerusalem.

The conference could come to no firm agreement concerning the status of non-Christian religions.

> As to whether the non-Christian religions as total systems of thought and life may be regarded as in some sense or to some degree manifesting God's revelation Christians are not agreed.[51]

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., pp. 14, 15.

[50] Ibid., p. 15.

[51] Ibid., p. 44.

The need, however, for further study of non-Christian religions was affirmed. The disposal to regard other religions as "Old Testaments" was repudiated. The need for experiment in religious worship, practice, and in cooperative relations between Christians and non-Christians "in all good social and community movements" was emphasized.[52]

The missionary imperative felt at Madras was stated boldly:

> There are many non-Christian religions that claim the allegiance of large multitudes. We see and readily recognize that in them are to be found values of deep religious experiences and great moral achievements. Yet we are bold enough to call men out of them to the feet of Christ. We do so because we believe that in Him alone is the full salvation which man needs.[53]

What was the influence of Dr. Kraemer in these deliberations pertinent to his book? His influence was greater than can be demonstrated by comparing points in the book with points in the findings of the conference. Evidence of the thinking stimulated by his work is found in Volume I of the Madras Series, which is a continuation of discussions stimulated by Dr. Kraemer.[54]

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[52] Ibid., pp. 44-46.

[53] Ibid., p. 20.

[54] The Authority of the Faith, "The Madras Series": Presenting Papers Based Upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), Vol. I.

In general, it may be said that the contribution of Hendrik Kraemer is a part of the neo-orthodox challenge to contemporary theology, and that the force of this challenge was decidedly felt at Madras, 1938.

Whitby, 1947

World War II began in less than nine months after the close of the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Madras. The intervening years put to severe test the ability of the Council to keep the vast world missionary enterprise of the Christian Churches in operation.

The test was met and the task was done when the Council met in conference in Whitby. Christian fellowship implemented by many international gatherings also met the test, and the delegates who met with common Christian purpose were representative of nations that had recently been at war with one another.

The purpose of Whitby was less pretentious than that of Madras. The greater part of the work done at Madras both of theological and of practical nature proved to be still valid. The task before the Council at Whitby was defined by the need of completing the knowledge of the effects of the war upon the churches and by the need to re-examine "fundamental missionary principles and policy."[55]

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[55] C. W. Ranson, ed., Renewal and Advance: Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World (London: Edinburg House Press, 1948), p. 6.

Part II of the agenda, Word of Redemption, "carried the conference back to the essential apostolic Gospel, in an attempt to discover its riches and its relevance to the need of a stricken world."[56]

The findings of the conference concerning missionary principles include the following emphases.

The significance of the Incarnation is that God reveals Himself "in a person." Though the Gospel begins by divine initiative, the reality of Christian fellowship has become the means for Christian life and service. The fellowship includes the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit and participation in the life of the "new society."[57] This fellowship "is a vital part of what the Church has to offer to the world today."[58]

In the Christian mission, the Church must not depend on the proclamation of the word alone. "Mere preaching, without the quality of Christian living, is not evangelism."[59] The need for the embodiment of the Christian ethic was thus brought into focus.

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[56] Ibid., p. 7.

[57] Ibid., p. 211.

[58] Ibid., p. 212.

[59] Ibid.

The problem of communication has always been difficult. It is not less so now. There is a present day need for theological interpretation of the Christian Gospel in terms relevant to modern thinking. Yet, it is an easy matter to give too much emphasis to this matter. The laity of the Church must be "set on fire" before there can be an effective evangelism today.

The conference at Whitby was a regathering of forces, and a renewal of fellowship. The work of reconstruction to meet the needs imposed by post-war situations remained to be done.

Willingen, 1952

"At the earlier meeting it was felt that . . . 'the most testing days of the Christian mission, at least for our generation, lay behind'."[60] This was a natural conclusion after the trying years of crisis and war which the missionary enterprise had faced for nearly two decades.

> At Willingen, however, it was said, " . . . clouds and thick darkness surround the city, and we know with complete certainty that the most testing days of the Christian mission in our generation lie just ahead."[61]

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[60] Missions Under the Cross: Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952, Norman Goodall, ed. (London: Edinburg House Press, 1953; published for the International Missionary Council), p. 11.

[61] Ibid., p. 12.

The theme for the meeting was "The Missionary Obligation of the Church." Perhaps the need for undergirding the missionary movement with an adequate theological basis was felt more keenly by the Ad Interim Committee than ever before in the history of the International Missionary Council.[62] The results of the meeting were not satisfactory from this point of view in the evaluation of Norman Goodall.

> There did not finally emerge the one inevitable word in which theological clarity and prophetic insight were manifestly conjoined. Nor did there appear the new directive which might set the world mission of the Church on a surer and swifter road towards its fulfillment. Maybe those who looked for as much as this to come out of Willingen were asking amiss or seeking something for which neither the Church nor the world is ready.[63]

The papers which were prepared for the Willingen Conference were of superior quality and give promise of achievement, if the Council maintains its interest in the theology of missions.

The report which incorporated the theological findings of the committee appointed at the Conference was received but not adopted. This action was not intended as a reflection on the prepared report, but as an indication of an unfinished search.

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[62] Ibid., cf. pp. 12-15.

[63] Ibid., p. 14.

The report, which was received but not adopted, frankly recognized that differences of theological perspective had prevented a truly unanimous statement.

> Some phrases in our report, though they represent what we can with good conscience say together, cover up persistent differences among us which require further prayerful thought and study if we are to grow together in mutual understanding.[64]

The differences were summarized in four statements, but the major difference was in eschatological interpretation.

The statement itself which was presented to the Conference was based on the faith that God is sovereign in His world, but the nature of His sovereignty is hid in the offense of the cross.[65] The missionary obligation of the Church must be rooted in the love of God.[66] The missionary task of the Church lies in any areas "where men are living by a faith that denies or rebels against the faith of Christ."[67]

The area of missionary theology has not been defined, and cannot be defined except within the general limits of a particular theological perspective. Two fruitful suggestions have been made by the editor of the book incorporating the work and findings of Willingen, 1952. The first is that the new theological perspectives that have been developed in recent years be interpreted in the light of the missionary obligation of the Church. The second suggestion outlines some of the fields of interest in missionary theology. These include: (1) "the relation between 'history' and 'salvation history';" (2) "the meaning of the Christian hope in relation to the message and practice of missions;" (3) "the bearing of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit on the nature of the Church and the Christian ministry;" and (4) "the theological significance of 'foreign' missions within the total missionary responsibility of the Church."[68]

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[64] _Ibid._, p. 244.

[65] _Ibid._, pp. 238-241.

[66] _Ibid._, p. 241.

[67] _Ibid._, p. 242.

The Conference at Willingen has given a task to the theologians of the Churches to include the world-wide outreach of the Christian Gospel in their thinking.

The Rise of the Ecumenical Movement

While the events of world missionary planning were taking place, there was emerging an ecumenical consciousness among the Christian Churches of the world. The missionary enterprise had created a world-wide church. The missionary leaders thought in terms of international and interracial Christian obligations and fellowship. The manner in which these missionary activities have laid "ecumenical foundations" has been traced by W. Richey Hogg.[69]

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[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.

The ecumenical movement has stimulated a re-thinking of the nature and purpose of the Christian Church, which should be integrated into task of laying the theological foundations of the world mission of the world church.

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[69] Hogg, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER II

RE-THINKING MISSIONS

A Laymen's Committee representing seven American denominations was formed at the suggestion of Dr. John R. Mott for the purpose of giving the laymen of the churches a basis for their attitude toward foreign missions in the modern world. A Fact Finding Commission was appointed for the purpose of studying conditions on the mission fields in the Orient, principally in Japan, China, India, and Burma. An Appraisal Commission was appointed to study the work of the Fact Finders and to make an on-the-spot observation of the work of missionaries on the field. It was then the duty of the Appraisal Commission to evaluate the missionary enterprise and to make recommendations concerning future aims and methods.

The mission boards of the denominations represented on the Laymen's Committee gave no direction whatsoever to the Fact Finders or to the Appraisal Commission, but offered full cooperation in making available all of their facilities to them. The resulting study was not a self-evaluation by missionary agencies, but a study from the point of view of the non-missionary personnel.

Professor William Ernest Hocking was named chairman of the Appraisal Commission which was composed of fifteen persons. The results of the work of the Appraisal Commission were published in Re-thinking Missions, A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years, which appeared in 1932. The formulation of the theological basis for the Inquiry is generally credited to Dr. Hocking.

The Theological Basis for Re-thinking Missions

The theology of missions on which Re-thinking Missions is based can be summarized under the following heads: (1) The Essence of Christianity, (2) The Meaning and Function of the Church, (3) Motives in Christian Missions, (4) The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions, and (5) The Ultimate Objectives of Christian Missions.

The Essence of Christianity

Christianity is a moral and spiritual approach to life based on the simple message of Jesus and the example of his life. The uniqueness of Christianity lies first of all in its simplicity. Through the peculiar clarity and force with which the problems of religion made their impact on Jesus, and the directness with which he penetrated to the heart of the answers, Christianity presents a simple rather than complex faith to mankind. The uniqueness of Christianity also consists "perhaps chiefly in those things different from philosophy."[1] These peculiarly religious characteristics are religious symbolism, observances, and historical fellowship. These elements have received scant attention in the report in the development of a conception of the functions of Christianity in non-Christian lands, except the assertion that greater emphasis should be placed on religious practices such as meditation to which the people are already accustomed.

Christianity has a monotheistic doctrine of God. This means that though God is manifest in the varied natural phenomena, "the unity of nature corresponds" to "the unity of the divine will."[2] This means also that "the supreme law of the world is not physical but moral," which "governs the destinies" of men and societies.[3] There is therefore a law of moral consequence, but beyond this law (and Christianity shares this faith with Buddhism) is a higher principle, admitting release.[4] This higher principle is understood by Christianity in terms of personal love. The individual can experience the presence of God, and Christianity "teaches that the highest privilege of religion is a direct companionship with God and union with his will."[5]

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[1] Re-thinking Missions, A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), p. 53.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

The teachings of Jesus relate the love of God to the love of man. Thus Christianity requires "a conception of rightful human relationships."[6] These relationships cannot be forced into legal codes, but depend upon the spirit of love "as the guiding principle in meeting all specific ethical problems."[7]

The person who practices Christianity must seek a balance between withdrawal from the world and participation in social activity.[8]

The Meaning and Function of the Church

The Church is in many ways a helpless institution and a victim of circumstances. It ought to be the embodiment of the spirit of Christ, but finds itself enmeshed in the weaknesses of organizational life and burdened with creeds that are no longer meaningful to the modern generation. Many sincere Christians find life in the Church impossible and are forced to find Christian fellowship outside it. The Church in the Orient reflects the weaknesses and the divisions of the sending churches, and missionaries who have established it have been too much concerned for denominationalism to place first emphasis on the simple message of Christ. This same failure has been reflected in the evangelism of the missionaries, which, on the whole, has been primarily concerned with doctrines.

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[5] Ibid., p. 54.

[6] Ibid., p. 56.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., pp. 54, 55.

The Church ought to have been established by a presentation of the simple Christian message without any effort to transplant a church. This method would have allowed a church organization to have grown around the central truths of Christianity with the structure being determined by the experiences of the new believers. "We need to look forward to no time when the authentic spirit of Christ, if freed from hampering organizational purposes, will be an undesired visitor in any land."[9]

These "hampering organizational purposes" have prevented the establishment of an indiginous church in the Orient. Nonetheless, a church has been established which is a part of the universal Church. This actual church ought to strive to become the ideal church. In order to do this, it must become "a spiritual fellowship and a communion of those who have found a new spring of life and power" in the message of Jesus.[10]

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

> The church of this order will not be a substitute for life; it will rather be a spiritual organism which can further the true ends of life. With that purpose in view, modes of baptism will take a place of lesser importance; forms of ecclesiastical organization will fall into the background; the exact formulation of doctrinal phrases will have less significance; statistics as a measure of success will drop out of focus; and all the great lines of missionary activity will converge on the primary business of raising as many persons as possible into their full measure of life and preparing them to make their contribution to the world.[11]

A church thus oriented to the purpose of the Christian faith would hold as few of the essentials of religion as possible and would act to purify and simplify the religions of Asia.[12] This community of believers would maintain its distinctness as a Christian group and would "illustrate the 'pure instance' of an Oriental Christianity."[13]

In order to create this ideal church which would serve not only to spread Christianity but to purify Oriental religions, missionaries sent out by the boards must be carefully chosen, specially trained, and free from sectarianism.

Motives in Christian Missions

The motives for Christian missions have been altered by a threefold change in modern life: "a. The altered theological outlook; b. The emergence of a world-culture; and c. The rise of nationalism in the East."[14] Of these changes, the altered theological outlook has had a more direct bearing upon the motives of missions from the perspective of the sending churches.

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[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 110.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[13] *Ibid.*

> Generally speaking, these changes have occurred: Western Christianity has in the main shifted its stress from the negative to the affirmative side of its message . . . . Whatever its present conception of the future life, there is little disposition to believe that sincere and aspiring seekers after God in other religions are to be damned: it has become less concerned in any land to save men from eternal punishment than from the danger of losing the supreme good.[15]

Many elements of culture are universal in nature. Included among these is religion, and the increased knowledge of the great non-Christian religions has affected the motive for missions, according to the degree by which this new knowledge has affected the conception of the Christian religion.

The new nationalism in the East has become a determinative factor in the principle of selection by which elements of culture are received. This has been at least partially responsible for the elimination of nationalistic motives in missions.

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[14] Ibid., pp. 18-23.

[15] Ibid., p. 19.

The principle of religious certainty has been retained in the motive of missions, because religious certainty imposes an obligation to missionary activity upon the man or church who possesses it.[16] The bases of certainty, the authority of the Bible, and the divinity of Christ have been seriously called into question, and a new sense of religious certainty has become the object of search.

The "valid impulse of love to men" remains a motive in missions, because one must share his faith as "the best one has to offer."[17]

The newer interpretation of the Kingdom of God as the accomplishment of God's will in and for this life, is a goal which has been made the aim of the Christian message.[18]

A summary of the motive for Christian missions has been made in the following words:

> To seek with people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ, and endeavoring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world.[19]

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[16] Ibid., p. 6.

[17] Ibid., p. 4.

[18] Ibid., p. 59.

[19] Ibid., p. 60.

The Relation of Christianity with Non-Christian Religions

Just as Christianity has undergone change during the modern missionary period, so have non-Christian religions, and Christianity has been partially responsible for these changes by bringing to bear on these religions the criticisms of Christian life and practice.[20] What should be the attitude of Christians toward these religions and these changes?

The thrust of "materialism, secularism, and naturalism" has put Christianity in the role of an ally with religions it formerly opposed, against the new enemy of all religions.[21]

The first step in establishing a relationship with non-Christian religions is the recognition that "we are all brothers in a common quest."[22] This new relationship requires a "determined effort" in order to "see through the diversities of language, of symbol, of observance, to the identities of meaning."[23]

One result of the new relationship will be " . . . the promotion of world unity through a spread of the understanding of the vital elements of all religion."[24]

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[20] Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

[21] Ibid., p. 29.

[22] Ibid., p. 31. (Quoted from C. B. Olds of Okayama, A Venture in Understanding.)

[23] Ibid., p. 32.

[24] Ibid., p. 27.

Moreover, the success of the Christian mission depends on the vitality of non-Christian religions.

> The fate of religion in China, in any time we can now foresee, depends chiefly on the fate of these religions: for it is they that to this people must long continue to represent their sacred history. We can reach the hundred thousands, but not the hundred millions except through their media.[25]

The new Christian approach to non-Christian religions is described by two words: permeation and sharing. By the presence of the Christian community in a land, the people of the land will learn something of the moral sensitiveness of Christianity which demands the destruction of certain social practices that have the sanction of religion, such as child marriage in India. The missionary must truly regard the Kingdom of God as a "leaven hid in a measure of meal."[26] This process has long been effectively challenging these lands to make social changes. The principle of sharing recognizes that there are certain truths in non-Christian religions which are applicable to Christianity and that there are undiscovered truths which may be sought together.

> The Christian will therefore regard himself as a co-worker with the forces which are making for righteousness within every religious system. If he can in any way aid or encourage

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

> these forces, he will regard it a part of his Christian service to spend thought and energy in this way.[27]

The missionary cannot desire the extinction of any religion "until it has yielded up to the rest its own ingredient of truth."[28] The religion which shall be "the religion of the modern man, the religious aspect of the coming world culture,"[29] "will not be," according to ideas found in many quarters, "identical with any of the positive religions now offering themselves."[30] The missionary will enter into long and unhurried conversations with representatives of other religions which will result in a wider knowledge of these religions, a clarified self-knowledge, "and from time to time, as the supreme success, the birth of an idea which will stir and strengthen religion in the race."[31]

The Objective of Christian Missions

At the present time there are two types of missionary endeavor: evangelistic and philanthropic. Sometimes these modes of work are at cross-purposes, each arousing the jealousy of the other. Most often, however, the philanthropic work of the missions serves the purpose of evangelism. This practice, well rooted in the history of missions, has aroused the resentment of many people who have been served. The philanthropic activities of Christian missions should be divorced from any active proselyting program, and be devoted to human services. Evangelism should be changed from the traditional type of doctrinal preaching to the more indirect witness of the Christian life.

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[27] Ibid., p. 40.

[28] Ibid., p. 44.

[29] Ibid., p. 21.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 48.

A completely indigenous church should be established to enrich the life of the universal church and to act as a purifier of the religions of the land. The primary object of the Christian mission will be to contribute to the moral and spiritual unity of mankind.

Reaction to _Re-thinking Missions_

Re-thinking Missions was obviously revolutionary, for it called for a radical re-orientation of the missionary enterprise on a new theological foundation. This fact, of course, did not escape the attention of those who were vitally interested in Christian missions; nor did it escape the attention of those who were primarily interested in the mood of the times. Due to the tremendous publicity that had been given to the Inquiry for two years and to the purpose of the Laymen's Committee to make its findings available to the rank and file of American laymen, the response was immediate and in some cases violent.

Types of Reaction

According to Archibald G. Baker, all of the boards representing denominations which had representatives on the Laymen's Committee found "the first four chapters unsatisfactory," and some repudiated them "as false entirely."[32] Further, he defined four theological positions which form the basis for reaction to the Inquiry.

The first position emphasizes the full doctrinal content of the Gospel and asserts that man needs to have God come to his rescue. Those who held this position rejected the theology of missions advocated in Re-thinking Missions.

The second position is characterized by the doctrinal statement of the Jerusalem Conference, 1928, which is Christocentric rather than Bibliocentric. As has been noted, the message of the Jerusalem Conference can be summarized in these words: "Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and what man can become."[33] The phrase

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[32] Archibald G. Baker, "Reaction to the Laymen's Report," The Journal of Religion, XIII (October, 1933), 384. The Methodist Board had made only a preliminary statement at this time.

[33] Ibid., p. 394. Re-thinking Missions rejected the phrase, "Our message is Jesus Christ," as the basic missionary message to the Orient because "Jesus Christ" is an unexplained symbol. Cf. p. 52.

"Jesus Christ" was regarded by Dr. Baker as a compromise term which could be fitted into almost any theological position. He felt that the greater part of the members of the Jerusalem Conference gave a traditional interpretation to the meaning of "Jesus Christ." Most of the missionary boards accepted the position stated by the Jerusalem Conference.[34] However, there was sufficient elasticity to the Jerusalem statement so that some who subscribed to it accepted the theology of Re-thinking Missions and others rejected it. Those who rejected it leaned toward a conservative position, and those who accepted it leaned toward a liberal position.

The third position is that of the advanced liberals. The advanced liberal believes essentially "in a theistic God," and his beliefs "have been arrived at by naturalistic methods of investigation and reasoning."[35] According to this position, "man does not need and never has received any miraculous revelation or redemption."[36] Those who held this view accepted the theological position of Re-thinking Missions.

The fourth position is homocentric and those representing this point of view ignored the question of missions in their contributions to the religious press.

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 396.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

Comments by Those Concerned for the Missionary Enterprise

A review of the comments of those concerned for the missionary enterprise has revealed attitudes ranging from outright rejection to a qualified acceptance.

Basil Matthews expressed a profound appreciation for Re-thinking Missions, but was puzzled by the following statement which it contained: "Promoting world unity through the spread of the universal element in religion."[37] In his discussion with four New England groups of students, numbering about two hundred men and women, questions regarding this statement came up again and again. They asked, "What does it mean?" Dr. Matthews answered that on the face of it it means "that what is common to all religions is true."[38] Over against this basis for universality in religion, he placed the pronouncement of the Jerusalem Conference which found truth in the distinctive elements in Christianity and advocated that missionaries "proclaim and live the distinctive until it becomes universal."[39] It is at the point of what is universal in religion that Dr. Matthews has "found the greatest difficulty in finding Re-thinking Missions adequate for the education of youth in the world-mission of Christianity."[40]

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[37] Basil Matthews, "The World's Youth and 'Re-thinking Missions'," Religion in Life, II (Spring, 1933), 191. Quoted from Re-thinking Missions, p. 28.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 192.

In order to interpret the point of view of Re-thinking Missions accurately, Dr. Matthews sought to find further statements of Dr. Hocking, the chairman of the Appraisal Commission, as interpretative comment.[41] In an address given in November, 1932, Dr. Hocking made the following pertinent statement: "We unite in love of Christ and in the passionate desire that his spirit may spread throughout this work of men - - distracted, broken, suffering and sinful."[42] He further quoted Dr. Hocking's statement made in a lecture given in January, 1933:

> I believe that Christianity has given the name of Christ to what we might call the voice of God to man; and I like to think of the word Christ as meaning what we might call the human face of God. The veil of reality has been broken, as though some being had come forward to us out of the darkness; and we can say to the universe, not, "It is there," but "Thou are there, and carest for me."
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> It is this message which Christianity, I think, brings to men with an assurance and definiteness which we find in no other religion.[43]

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[40] Ibid.

[41] It is now possible to distinguish between Dr. Hocking's personal views and the view of Re-thinking Missions. Cf. Hocking, Living Religions and a World Faith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), pp. 275-284.

[42] Matthews, loc. cit.

[43] Ibid., p. 193. Remarks of Professor Hocking at the Alden Tuthill Lecture, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Chicago, January 26, 1933, in answer to a question about the verifiable meaning of a "lost soul."

In the above quotation, Dr. Hocking has expressed in his own way a belief in the initiative of God in revealing His "human face" in Christ, and a faith that in Christ there is an assurance of a personal God not to be found in the same degree of definiteness in any other religion. In this connection, it is well to remember a remark by Guy W. Sarvis: "Even in Re-thinking Missions, in only a few passages do the authors escape from the assumption that the missionary is primarily a giver."[44] The real attitude expressed in Re-thinking Missions seems to be that if the Christian missionaries are brothers with the leaders of non-Christian religions in a common quest, they are elder brothers.

In discussing the changing Christian attitude toward non-Christian religions, James Thayer Addison pointed out that the general attitude has not reached the "radical degree" reflected in Re-thinking Missions.[45] The real point of resistance for the boards of missions and those who share their views is the apparent denial by the Appraisal Commission of the uniqueness of Christianity.

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[44] Guy W. Sarvis, "The Principle of Sharing in Missions," The International Review of Missions, XXIII (July, 1934), 248.

[45] James Thayer Addison, "The Changing Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions," The International Review of Missions, XXII (January, 1933), 121.

In A Theology for Christian Missions, Hugh Vernon White made favorable comment on what he called a "regulative principle by which Christian missions are to be studied and appraised,"[46] which he found in Re-thinking Missions. This regulative principle is that the value of the missionary enterprise should be determined by "the good of humanity rather than the growth of a special movement."[47] He also approved the principle presented in Re-thinking Missions that the "substance" of Christianity can be communicated as a way of life.[48] He rejected, however, as a complete mistake the assertion that the "ideal method" by which Christianity should have been rooted in the Orient as a "spiritual essence."[49] In the main, Dr. White appears to have presented his theology of missions without being greatly influenced by the Inquiry.

The Foreign Mission Boards of the Northern Baptist Church rejected the statement of the aim of Christian missions by the Inquiry as being inadequate.

> Many of our missionaries feel that the pronouncement by the Laymen as to the aim of Christian missions is lacking in evangelistic earnestness and strongly prefer the more positive state-

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[46] Hugh Vernon White, A Theology for Christian Missions (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1937), p. 70.

[47] Ibid., quoted from Re-thinking Missions, pp. 3, 4.

[48] Ibid., p. 40.

[49] Ibid., p. 62.

> ments contained in the "Foreign Missions Policies."[50]

The statement in the "Foreign Missions Policies was quoted as follows:

> The paramount aim of the Christian missionary enterprise is to lead men everywhere to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, through whom they may find the Father, and to establish among them New Testament churches which will maintain and propagate the teachings of Jesus Christ.[51]

There have been three severe criticisms of Re-thinking Missions which reflect different perspectives. Perhaps the most thoroughgoing adverse criticism of the Inquiry was made by Robert E. Speer from the Conservative point of view. Dr. Speer was secretary of the Presbyterian (U.S.A.) Board of Foreign Missions. He objected to the relegation of Jesus to a place among the founders of religion, and of Christianity to the position of being on a quest with non-Christian religions for the "common ground of all religion."[52] He also showed concern for the omissions in the "new" theological basis for missions, and pointed out that "the Holy Spirit of the New Testament is . . . nowhere mentioned."[53]

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[50] P. H. J. Lerrigo, comp. and ed., Northern Baptist Rethink Missions: A Study of the Report of the Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry (New York: Baptist Board of Education, Department of Missionary Education), p. 19.

[51] Ibid., p. 18.

[52] Robert E. Speer, "Re-thinking Missions" Examined (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), p. 28. The contents of this book originally appeared in The Missionary Review of the World, January, 1933. Cf. also Speer, "An Appraisal of the Appraisal," The Missionary Review of the World, LVI (January, 1933), 7-27.

[53] Ibid., p. 29.

Pages 45-52 lacking in numbering only according to Vanderbilt University.

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> The Report not only does not commit itself to the position of the New Testament and of the faith of the Church with regard to the Deity of Christ and the meaning of His death and the great facts of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, but it makes clear that the Report is not based on this position.[54]

After making several of the same observations as did Dr. Speer, Harold Lindsell, who represents the Fundamentalist position in his A Christian Philosophy of Missions, wrote:

> The real hope which came from the sickness of missions after the publication of the Hocking findings was the possibility of radical surgery in which the enterprise could be reoriented to a valid foundation. And if surgery could not accomplish this end it were better for missions to die than for missions to exist in bondage to modernism. The truism does not change, that non-Biblical missions are worse than no missions at all, for history shows that the admixture of truth and error is harder to overcome than error alone.[55]

Roy L. Smith, in the Fondren Lectures for 1941, set forth the conditions which brought adversity to the Christian world mission:

> Perhaps the most serious blow delivered at the missionary enterprise was the publication of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry in 1932. This extended work, the result of a world tour of mission fields by a select group of religious leaders was frankly critical of the missionary program of Protestantism. But its most serious result was not in the fault found with the missionary enterprise itself but in the spirit of

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 31.

> suspicion it aroused among the people of the Church. Hundreds of thousands of churchmen who never read a line of the committee's findings assumed that the entire enterprise had been weighed and found wanting, and they withdrew their support entirely.[56]

This devastating criticism was not aimed primarily at the report, but at the kind of publicity which prepared the way for its publication. According to Dr. Speer, the newspaper releases "used sections most likely to arouse public concern."[57] The concern of this study is not centered in the pragmatic results of the Report, as such. The analysis of Dr. Smith proves, however, that either the theological mood of the time was such that the reports of the Inquiry were not acceptable, or that the criticisms of the Inquiry showed a failure of the missionary enterprise. Perhaps there was an admixture of both in the journalistic accounts which caused people suffering under economic depression to welcome release from one of their financial obligations.

The theological mood of the time seemed to be turning away from the theological position of Re-thinking Missions. In an article, "Whither Liberalism," Gaius Glenn Atkins recognized this situation.

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[56] Roy L. Smith, The Revolution in Missions (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 87.

[57] Robert E. Speer, op. cit., p. 12.

> . . . The attitudes of the various denominations toward the laymen's missionary report is perhaps as good a test as any by which to measure the influence of liberal scholarship in the field of comparative religion upon the contemporary Christian mind.[58]

John A. Mackay in an early analysis of the Report predicted the theological trend which determined the fate of Rethinking Missions as an influence on the missionary enterprise. He said, "The most appropriate term to describe the theological groundwork of this Report is the word 'inadequacy'."[59] For him, it was inadequate in its conception of Christianity based on the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is more than a religious genius who revealed God by his life of communion with God. "There is something in Christianity which goes beyond religion in the ordinary sense."[60] It is inadequate because it has ignored the changed theological perspective under the influence of the Kierkegaard renaissance. The newer perspective includes a recognition of the tragic reality of sin; a belief that God is no mere "hypostasis of thought"; and a belief that personality is achieved "by a process of constant decision involving a definite 'either-or'."[61]

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[58] Gaius Glenn Atkins, "Whither Liberalism," Religion in Life, III (Summer, 1934), 333.

[59] John A. Mackay, "Theology of the Laymen's Inquiry," The International Review of Missions, XXII (April, 1933), 176.

[60] Ibid., pp. 183, 184.

[61] Ibid., p. 178.

> . . . What we have in the chapters under discussion is the requiem of a thought day that is dying rather than the trumpet of dawn of a day that is coming, the sunset glow of nineteenth century romanticism caught and prolonged in the mirrors of Re-thinking Missions.[62]

Conclusion

The Report reflects the weaknesses of the type of liberalism which it represented. These weaknesses have been pointed out by the various writers who have been quoted. The sovereignty of God is minimized while the ability of man to meet his own needs without supernatural help is emphasized. Religious truth is put on a rational plane with the exception that the ancient intuitions of the race are recognized as having rational value. The sin of man and his need of redemption are not primary concerns of religious activity. The sense of the urgency of the Christian Gospel is dimmed by the need for pursuing a common quest with representatives of other religions. In retrospect, it can also be said that the doctrine of the Church on which much of the criticism of the missionary enterprise was based is completely out of harmony with present trends of thought.

Despite these adverse criticisms, however, the spirit of Re-thinking Missions has been continued in many of the articles contributed to scholarly religious journals which have been reviewed for the purposes of this study. This has been particularly true in the field of comparative religion or the history of religions. Perhaps it is in this area that the Inquiry has made its most valuable contribution. While the conclusions reached have not been accepted as a basis for missionary endeavor, Re-thinking Missions has pricked the Christian conscience with its criticism of the unChristian attitudes that have been held by Christians toward their non-Christian brothers in humanity.

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[62] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF A MISSIONARY THEOLOGY

A universal religion has long been the dream of devout men and of would-be world conquerors. Devout men have longed for a universal faith because they have passionately believed in the truth of their own religion and because they have yearned for a greater sense of oneness with all mankind. Conquerors and would-be world rulers have wanted a universal religion because they have recognized the dynamic power of religion to unite or divide men. Religions have been spread by holy men and by conquerors. Sometimes they have worked together and sometimes at cross purposes.

Methods of Achieving Universal Religion

The Christian missionary enterprise is older than the New Testament. Christians have always been interested in the conversion of non-Christians, and the Great Commission which envisions a world faith in Jesus Christ has never been far removed from the purpose of a significant number of Christians.

The historical method of achieving the goal of the Great Commission has been what in modern terms is known as radical displacement. In this method the purpose of Christian mission has been to convert non-Christians to the

Christian faith. Peoples of no faith and adherents of any of the other religions of the world have looked very much the same to the Christian missionary.

Missionaries, regardless of what Church or sect they have represented, have moved with a single purpose: to win men to Christ.

However, with the Renaissance, new and radically different concepts of religion have become a part of the culture of Christendom. Religious presuppositions long generally accepted were subjected to scientific scrutiny and their validity was questioned along with the validity of the presuppositions of the physical nature of the universe.

The religions of mankind came to be viewed from a different perspective. Truth was divorced from revelation in the new thought patterns, and unaided and undirected reason of man assumed the judgment seat.

As a result of the new role of reason, men began to make efforts to isolate the principle of religion from its outward manifestations in historic religions. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, using reason alone, sought to determine the universal elements of religion as a basis for faith. Others sought to explain religion in terms of the new sciences as they were developed.

Philosophy also declared its independence after a thousand years of residence in the halls of theology.

Theology began to grow restless under the demands of revelation. Biblical scholars in the new intellectual atmosphere started to study the Bible from the perspective of its historic origin.

These developments later gave rise to a new concept of universality in religion. Schleiermacher, reacting against rationalism, isolated the idea of God-consciousness as the basic element in religion and constructed a Christian theology based on this concept. His work became valuable to the students of comparative religions, and religions were studied as phenomena of the religious aspirations of man. Religions were seen as the product of one giant loom, woven with a multitude of patterns.

Thus man, it was discovered, did not have to wait for a universal religion. It has always been. All that remained necessary was to recognize that this is so.

What would be the results, if this concept of universality should become dominant? First of all, proselytism would have to be renounced as a method by the missionary religions. Religions would recognize that their common enemy is irreligion or secularism, and that they must join in battle against their common enemy as allies, and stop their side wars among themselves.

In the second place, the process of identification would be begun in earnest. The divine element in each religion would be recognized as the same as that found in any other religion, whatever its name or the degree of its development of theological explanation.

In the third place, particularity would be recognized as a present necessity. Men could not be expected to surrender their basic loyalties, conceived in terms of their own religious symbols. Customs, habits of worship, and even taboos could not be expected to be immediately displaced.

However, in the fourth place, three processes would be set in motion whereby these particularities would yield to a more genuine universality.

The first of these processes would be that of penetration, which in reality is a cultural cross-fertilization. Religious ideas, and practices, now essential to only one faith would pass over naturally into the thought patterns and practices of other religions as a result of religious association based on equality in fellowship. By this process religions would grow more and more alike in essence and practice.

The second process would be syncretism in its commonly understood (dictionary definition) meaning of signifying a mixing of the elements of religion without particular reference to their compatibility.

The third process at work would be what William E.

Hocking has called reconception.[1] This process implies the necessity for the emergence of new concepts, which would not be precisely defined by the older categories of the religion or religions from which they came. This would not be synthetic in any unnatural sense, but would actually be a new naturalism. The idea is kin to the idea of mutation in the development of physical species. All present religions would change, giving way to the cooperative efforts of all religious men to achieve unity of faith.

Three ways to universality in religion have been presented: (1) the isolation of universally recognized elements of religion illustrated by the work of Cherbury; (2) the recognition of the universality of religion in the religiosity of mankind and the isolation of the God-consciousness of man as the universal element in religion; and (3) the radical displacement of all religions by one religion through its conversion of a great majority of the people of the world.

The effort to create a religion which would be universally recognized as true is futile. Religions cannot be consciously created, either by trying to isolate the basic elements of what people already believe, or by finding answers to their natural religious questions. Religions, like language, must grow into reality as a natural means of communication before they can be enriched by intercommunication. A "made" religion would have about as much chance to become the universal faith of mankind as Esperanto has to become the universal language of mankind.

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[1] William Ernest Hocking, Living Religion and a World Faith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), pp. 191 ff.

The way to universal faith by means of recognizing the validity of all faiths is more feasible than the method of creating a religion. Three theological presuppositions are necessary to the acceptance of this way to achieve universality. First, the concept of continuity must be recognized as valid. Second, natural revelation must be accepted as the normal means of God's communication with man. Third, the redemptive work of God must not be thought of as radically different from His creative activity.

How can a Christian accept this method of achieving a universal faith? He must either abandon his conviction of the unique nature of Christianity or assume (and this is a faith judgment) that no revelation can possibly supersede the knowledge of God that man has in Christ Jesus.

The way of radical displacement assumes the final truth of the religion which one professes. This is the historic way of the Christian faith. The underlying conviction of Christianity has been that "every knee should bend and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father."

The method of radical displacement has been seriously called into question by the revolution of thought in the modern world, and by its attendant revolutions in religious thought. The development of the science of comparative religions has forced a re-thinking of basic attitudes toward non-Christian religions, characterized by the categorical rejection of all prior attitudes which classified non-Christian religions as the work of the devil. New attitudes of appreciation of the religious worth of non-Christian religions have permeated nearly all groups of Christian thinkers.

Despite this attitude of appreciation, many Christian thinkers have maintained the position that Christianity must displace all other religions before there can be a world faith.

The advantages of this method of achieving universal faith are numerous. In the first place, central religious symbols would supply a genuine basis for unity. In the case of Christianity, the central symbol of faith, the historic Jesus, is firmly fixed in history, and, in the faith which makes him a religious symbol, he is firmly related to Divinity by the doctrine of incarnation. A mingling of the symbols would be futile, just as syncretism in religion has failed the historical test. Each religious symbol, whether in the person of Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, or Moses, has its own inner logic which makes a multiple center for faith impossible. There can be only one center of faith.

In the second place, the method of radical displacement of all religions by one would vindicate history. This statement is made in full consciousness of the historical inter-relatedness of religious development, and of all the syncretistic and eclectic tendencies in all of the world's living religions. These tendencies have brought new elements into old religions on a selective process determined by the inner logic of each religion. There are few instances of incompatible marriages of doctrines or practices that have stood the test of time.

In the third place, fellowship based on common experience of and loyalty to the central religious symbol would be real. Without genuine fellowship in believing, a world religion would not serve its uniting function. It would serve mankind no better than a truce in the divisive activities of religions. Religious fellowship must unite mankind, if universal faith is worth striving for. A universal religion must provide latitude in its fellowship for particularities. Freedom of differences must be preserved.

Can one religion displace all others? If so, it must demonstrate that its genius is not dependent on culture. All of the living universal type religions of the world have demonstrated their independence of a specific culture. Any religion which would displace all others must have ability to become indigenous in a variety of cultures without its vitally depending on any single culture. Each of the historic missionary religions has proved these abilities.

Essentials of a Universal Religion

What elements would be required for a universal religion? To answer this question one should avoid giving the essentials of his own faith in outline form. Yet, any truly religious person could not ignore the requirements of his own faith in answering the question, because to do so would be to deny the deepest intuitions of his being.

Any religion must come to terms with the concept of God. There are two major approaches to the problem. From the perspective of a positive faith in God, a religion must posit the universality and the knowability of the Divine. While the doctrine of God's concern for men is not a theoretical necessity, it is at least desirable from the standpoint of practical religion. For example, philosophic Hinduism teaches that God can be known through a mystical union with Him, but does not teach that He is concerned that men should know Him. It should be noted, however, that philosophic Hinduism is not the religion of the masses. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity all combine these three elements in their doctrine of God: God is universal, God is knowable, God is concerned for the welfare of men.

The doctrine of God can be approached from a negative perspective. This would include a concept that God allows Himself to be ignored. This is a theological presupposition of primitive Buddhism; however, it should be noted that Buddhism was not able to remain agnostic, but was forced to add theistic elements, even in Hinayana Buddhism. A negative approach to the doctrine of God would also include the concept that God belongs so completely to a non-physical realm that he is beyond all categories of man. He is neither good nor evil; moral nor immoral; personal or impersonal. This concept is also within the framework of philosophic Hinduism.

It is difficult to conceive how a world religion could be built on a negative approach to the doctrine of God, but it is a historical fact that living religions have been built on this basis and that these religions have proved themselves to be trans-cultural. Buddhism has been aggressively missionary and spectacularly successful in the East.

A doctrine of man in a universal religion must begin with the presupposition that in mankind there is a basic unity. The range of differences in mankind is apparently infinite. Every environmental element seems to affect man's characteristics. Even in homogenous groups individual differences are amazing in their variety. Yet, unless there is a fundamental unity in mankind, at least in potentiality, the dream of a universal religion must be lost.

At least two elements must be included in a doctrine of man for a universal religion, if universal religion is to bear any resemblance to a presently living religion. No religion is completely unconcerned about the moral nature of man. Some standard of righteousness must be universally applicable. Approaches to this problem have been made from a political point of view in the concept of international law, a league of nations, and rules for the conduct of warfare. Approaches to these problems have been predicated upon a belief that there are standards of conduct which will be universally accepted as right. A standard of righteousness would not have to be (and indeed should not be) codified, but that there is a sense of ought which can be appealed to and a formal conscience which can become operative, ought to be minimum concepts for an approach to the problem of human righteousness in religion.

The second element which must enter a minimum doctrine of man for a universal religion is that man's need of religion is universal. This has the stamp of the approval of history. Mankind has been "incurably" religious. He probably will continue to be. Any form of a doctrine which posits the creation of man by divine act, will make necessary the belief that the need for religion is universal in mankind.

Some historic religions have been theistic, some deistic, some humanistic, but none has escaped theistic elements in actuality. Non-theistic humanism, either in ancient or modern dress, cannot be established as a religion without some metaphysical presuppositions, and, therefore, these forms of religion cannot be rightly called religions. They become religions when they are set in metaphysical perspective. The minimum statement here is that their goal is beyond history.

This principle would exclude the so-called political religions from consideration. Some of these systems adopt the form of religion, and make religious (absolute) demands upon men's loyalties, but their goals are set within history and without metaphysical reference. These systems are in reality radical forms of humanism, and humanism cannot be religion no matter with how loud a voice it may claim to be.[2]

At this point, it should be stated that a universal religion must have a central, controlling belief. It may be that a man, or a book, or an institution is the principle element of understanding God and His purpose for man. Or, it may be that some particular understanding of God or man is the basic principle of explanation of religion life. Or, it may be a combination of elements, personal, theoretical, or institutional. Yet, this basic principle cannot be fundamentally self-contradictory. It must be capable of being the center of a mass of belief and practice of both a universal and a particular nature. Whatever may be said of this central element of faith, it must be present.

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[2] Political religion can be religion only in the sense that idolatry is religion.

The salvation of man has been an important concern of religion. The term salvation implies a predicament of man, actual or potential, from which he may be saved by following the teachings of his religion. The doctrine of salvation in any religion is set within the framework of its world-view, and depends for its formulation upon its doctrines of God and man. Some doctrine of salvation will be an essential element in any future world religion, even though the world-view of the world culture may change again and again. So long as there is any alternative for man for whatever concept of righteousness may be prevalent, a doctrine of salvation will be an element in religion.

Worship has been a constant element in religious practices. Worship has sometimes been based upon the theories of magic. Sometimes it has been based upon the presupposition of mysticism. In fact, the range of man's worship experience in the past has been identical with the range of his ideas of God, or the range of his concept of metaphysical possibility.

In any future world religion worship must be included as an essential element. Both individual and corporate worship must be possible. Though all great religions have not provided for corporate worship, a future world religion will require its possibility. Corporate worship provides an experience which undergirds the concept of the fellowship of believers, which will be necessary for a religion to fulfill its unifying function.

These six elements are essential to a universal religion: a doctrine of the universality of God, either positive or negative; a central symbol; a doctrine of the unity of mankind, either actual or potential; a doctrine of salvation; and a concept of worship which will include the possibility of both individual and corporate experiences.

In addition to these elements, five descriptive propositions should be stated:

(1) For a world religion, the requirements of uniformity must be at a minimum, while the latitude of difference must not be sufficient to destroy the genius of the religion. This principle may be illustrated by the requirements for membership by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America. A minimum statement of doctrine requires the simple affirmation, "Jesus is Lord." Yet, a church which categorically denies the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be admitted. The variety of creedal formulation, the range of church government and polity, and the variety of forms of worship among member churches are great. Any denial of Jesus

as the central symbol of the Christian faith or a denial of his proper relationship with God is considered by the Council as a renunciation of the historical continuity of the Christian religion.

(2) In any universal religion of mankind, there must be a satisfactory adjustment of the tension between universality and particularity. A world religion does not have to wait for a world culture; it must help produce it. If a religion denies elements which universality require, it cannot become universal. If particularism or provincialism in religion are allowed to destroy the unifying function of universality in religion, this religion cannot be universal. This principle may be illustrated by Roman Catholicism, which claims to be the universal Christian faith and that Christianity is the universal religion of mankind. Though national churches are prevented from achieving independence so that Roman Catholicism never means an association of free churches, the Roman Catholic Church is distinctly characterized by nationality groups. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States has definite characteristics which differentiate it from the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. Yet, the unity of the Church in these two provincial areas is maintained by a common loyalty to the Pope whose office must bear the tension between universality and particularity in the Roman Catholic Church the world over.

(3) Identification of believers must be possible in a world faith, and a believer must recognize a person whom he identifies as a fellow believer as a brother. The brotherhood of Moslems perhaps best illustrates this principle. Though the Moslem League is a weak political instrument, its reality recognizes the international requirement of Moslem brotherhood. A universal religion that will effectively unite mankind must have a genuine fellowship of believers.

(4) A universal religion must have exclusiveness with compassion. In order to maintain its identity, a religion must have a central symbol of faith, as has been pointed out. However, if it is to become a universal religion, it cannot be arrogant in its relation with non-believers. (Non-believers will exist so long as man lives within history.) Compassion is the proper religious attitude toward non-believers. Pride in the possession of an exclusive religious symbol is difficult to avoid. It must be avoided, however, before a religion can become universal in scope, and win the highest loyalty of the majority of mankind.

(5) A universal religion must be characterized by missionary zeal. The area of missions for any religion begins at the point where belief meets non-belief. The religion which becomes universal must have sufficient confidence in its central religious symbol that it seeks boldly to persuade all others of its truth. Two of the world's great living

religions would be practically non-existent today without their missionary zeal. These are Buddhism and Christianity, both of which are relatively unimportant in the country of their origin. This fact alone does not justify this proposition, but it is relevant to it. The proposition is justified by the inner logic of religious expansion that faith begets faith. Ultimate relativism would relegate mankind to a helpless and hopeless disunity. It would prevent the development of a world faith by destroying confidence in the universal truth and effectiveness of a religious symbol. Missionary zeal is antithetical to ultimate relativism.

Christianity as the Universal Religion

It is not an uncontested conclusion, but it is the conclusion of the writer that a universal faith can best be achieved by the radical displacement of the religions of mankind by one of the living religions of the world. Any one of four religions in their present form or something similar to it could achieve this goal. Judaism could become universal, if it would make citizenship in the divine commonwealth possible without requiring its proselytes to become Jews. It might be argued that this is impossible since the concept of the chosen people is central to the covenant relation with God. In reality, Christianity offers one way in which this result could be accomplished, but it is not the only feasible way. Judaism could well include the Christianity of the Gospels within its folds and make membership in the divine commonwealth contingent upon acceptance of the law and the prophets by the individual believer.

Mohammedanism could become the universal religion of mankind by applying a rigid historical corrective to its interpretation of Judaism and Christianity.

Buddhism could become the universal religion of mankind because its intensive pessimism regarding the world is corrected by its high ethical principles and by its hope of achieving the cessation of being with its attendant ills for mankind. Its amorphous nature would allow an eclectic inclusion of Jesus and other founders of religion as incarnations of the Buddha.

Hinduism has allowed people born outside of India to become its adherents within this century. It has the appearance of a universal religion because of its broad basis for tolerance of most known religious concepts and practices. However, its unrelenting loyalty to its rigid caste system would make it impossible for it to fulfill the requirements of a universal religion. It should be noted that there are religious and political protests against the caste system in India which, if successful, could negate this obstacle. However, without the caste system and its regard for India as a holy land, it would have to assume a radically new form.

Confucianism without its fusion with primitive Chinese religion is not a religion, and its ancient form is breaking up under the impact of the new world situation which includes industrialization and the radical change of political forms.

Any religion bound by intense nationalism cannot become universal. This would exclude Shintoism.

Christianity, along with Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, has proved its ability to become the universal religion of mankind. The rival claims of these religions will vie for the loyalty of the people of the world and will stand together in judgment against the claims of the various kinds of humanisms to be the religions of mankind.

The thesis presented here is that Christianity can become the universal religion of mankind.

Its central and controlling religious affirmation is that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of mankind. Its uniqueness among the religions of the world is based upon this claim plus the exclusive claim that He is the only Savior. This claim excludes multiple membership in other religions. One cannot be a Hindu, Buddhist, or anything else and be recognized as a Christian by Christians. Christianity presents an eternal "either-or" claim against allegiance to any other faith.

In Christianity, the principles of continuity and discontinuity are preserved.

Christianity is a historical religion with traceable affinities with religious problems faced by non-Christian religions. It not only admits its historical continuity with the religion of Israel, but makes this fact a part of its claim for its validity. The New Testament abounds with quotations from the Old Testament showing the historical continuity between them. Scholars, who have specialized in the history of religions, and Biblical scholars have traced the historical continuity between religious ideas of many religions and Christianity. Some ideas have come from non-Christian religions through the Old Testament to the New Testament. Some have come from the "inter-testamental" period into the New Testament. Others have come from the non-Judeo-Christian religious world during the formative period of the New Testament. In post-Biblical times, Christian theologians have turned to many sources, philosophical and religious, to find resources for the interpretation of Christian ideas. This is not the place to trace the pattern of the work that has been done. It is sufficient to say that the historical evidence points to a continuity between Christianity and its antecedent non-Christian religions in its development.

In spite of all the eclecticism and syncretism that can be shown in the development of Christianity, its genius as the religion of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has been preserved. Christianity has made many adjustments to cultural and political differences in its environment through the centuries, but whatever its forms that have developed under these varying conditions, it has remained the same in its fundamental genius. The person of Jesus Christ has ever been at the center of the loyalty of Christians, though oftentimes in a confused sense.

The revelation of God of Himself in Jesus Christ is the point of essential discontinuity. This is true, though Jesus was historically in religious continuity with his people, Israel. In Jesus, God broke into history personally. At a given time, He became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In Christianity there is no succession of incarnations. It is a once-for-all event. There are no historical antecedents for this event.

Revelation as an event is discontinuity. At the point of revelation Christianity becomes exclusive and makes its claim to finality. There cannot be two once-for-all revelatory events in history. There can be only one. If this claim is false, it would be difficult to escape relegating Christianity to the relativity of the flux of the history of religions.

Christianity provides for unity without conformity. It has developed multiple form to accomodate individual differences in the religious government of Christians, in modes of worship, in doctrine, and in practices. This lack of conformity occasions the appearance of disunity, which to many Christians constitutes a call to repentance. Doubtless there is sin in Christian disunity, but there would be greater sin in a conformity won at the cost of violating men's consciences. The magnitude of Christ cannot be contained in men's minds. The potential of experience of Christ cannot be realized without a variety of expression beyond the capacities of individuals. A religion which demands absolute conformity to doctrines expressed in countless details and which narrows the possibility of variety in experience and worship will have few followers. It cannot become universal. The multiplicity of forms in Christianity is evidence of its capacity for universality.

What has been said concerning divisions in Christianity does not imply that Christians should glory in their division. The sins involved in division are the sins of ignorance and bigotry. There is no excuse for lack of concern, because unconcern means either satisfaction with one's present state of knowledge and experience, or it indicates that one does not care whether he knows more about God and His will for him. Christians must be willing to learn from those who differ from them. The greatest sin in Christian divisions comes when those divisions are allowed to interrupt fellowship. This is its sin of bigotry. When the bond of

Christian fellowship is broken, the spirit of Christ has departed.

The movement to Christian unity has received tremendous impetus from the mission field. As Christianity turns its face to the non-Christian world to win it to Christ, Christian unity must develop. A fetish must not be made of unity. Truth must not be ignored. A larger vision will reveal that unity is found through the fellowship of believers, and that when Christendom becomes aware of its unity, that unity will not be characterized by uniformity. God made individuals and Christianity must allow for individual differences.

Christianity has proved its universality on the mission field. Its witness to the reconciling work of God in Christ has won the establishment of the church in many lands and nations. Those churches have become a part of the Ecumenical Church, which is an institution of a world faith.

The Nature of the Theological Task

Missionary theology was first formulated in the New Testament, and took as a presupposition the latent universalism of the Old Testament. The Pauline epistles were hammered out of missionary situations. The first great problem which confronted the Apostles was forced by the inclusion of Gentiles in Christian fellowship without first requiring them to become Jews. This problem came from the mission field. When one begins to face the issues related to missionary theology, he rapidly comes to the conclusion that all of the elements normally considered as belonging to the theology of the Christian faith belong to the theology of missions. This is obviously true, because the missionary obligation of Christianity cannot be regarded as a fragment of Christian truth. The missionary obligation is either at the center of the Christian imperative, or it is an undesirable appendage.

The task of the theologian in studying the missionary enterprise is to determine, first of all, whether the Christian message requires the missionary enterprise. If he determines that the Gospel does require it, then his task is to locate those elements of the Christian faith which are crucial to the world outreach of the Christian faith. As he approaches his task, he must be aware of the nature of the missionary's work which will be determined by his conception of the Gospel. The theological conception of the task and the method of its accomplishment go hand in hand.

The theology of missions must also be an answering theology; that is, it is apologetic in nature. There are two sources or questions which must be answered. First, a study of non-Christian religions challenges the basic assumptions of the Christian faith, and this challenge raises questions in the mind of the Christian theologian, which must be answered. In the second place, adherents of non-Christian religions ask questions concerning the validity of Christianity -- questions which arise in their minds and which probably would not occur to the Christian. It is the task of the Christian theologian to answer these questions.

There are six theological propositions which are basic to the theology of missions in its task of stating the elements of Christian faith which require the missionary enterprise.

The first theological proposition of Christian missions is that there is only one God, and He exercises universal dominion over all His creation. Without one, universal God there cannot be one universal religion. Polytheism could never have produced a universal religion because there was no unifying symbol. Even after the work of the eclectics and the syncretists, the multiplicity of gods could not be reduced to one. Though philosophy and pantheism sought desperately to show that all gods are the manifestations of divinity in the scheme of things, the gods could not be got rid of. They lost out when men quit believing in gods in order to believe in God. Polytheism could only stand for diversity in nature and in men, and could provide no unifying faith because at the point where unity should have manifested itself, there was diversity.

In polytheism, the gods manifested some control over nature and men, but their authority conflicted. Ultimately they were forced to yield to the inevitability of fate. Though polytheism has been defeated as religion, its spirit still stalks the world in the form of relativism, and fatalism which has taken the form of the absolute helplessness of men in the face of social and economic laws which control his environment.

The dominion of God is co-extensive with His creation, and beyond His creation there is nothing. God has never been absent from His world. The conditions of His creation have created conflicts, but He is able to make even these conflicts serve His purpose. History will never get out of His hand, no matter what kind of freedom He has allowed in its unfolding. History is the arena of His activity in relation with men, but He is able both to intrude it with the new or novel, and to project His purpose beyond it.

Because His dominion is universal, all men will ultimately acknowledge Him. This makes inevitable the realization of universal religion.

The second theological proposition essential to a missionary theology is that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God in a human person, and is the means of God's fullest revelation of Himself to mankind. In this incarnation we have the uniqueness of Jesus and the uniqueness of Christianity.

Strange things can be done with words. Efforts have been made to show the uniqueness of Jesus apart from the incarnation. Any person can be shown to be unique in his individuality. It is said that the same thing is true of a leaf. God came into history in a unique sense and made Jesus a unique person. There is an analogy between the act of God in Jesus and the act of God in the salvation of a man. God does for man what he cannot do for himself. So with Christ, God did for him what he could not do for himself, and in addition He did what He has done for no other. It has often been pointed out that the uniqueness of Christ is in his perfection. As a perfect man he was and is unique. His own moral courage, religious discipline, and obedience to the Father entered decisevely into his perfection. The analogy between incarnation and salvation holds true here. After God does for man what he cannot do for himself, man must progress through sanctification toward perfection by the same procedures exemplified in Jesus.

To deny the uniqueness of the incarnation does not mean that there is no basis for the Christian mission to the non-Christian world. This denial does, however, strain the claim to Christian absoluteness.

The third proposition essential to missionary theology is that God makes Himself known in the areas of His concern for the salvation of all mankind. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." The perfect revelation of God to man has been made in Christ, and the purpose of this revelation was the salvation of man. The nature of God is revealed in the short, descriptive phrase, "God is love." Christ gives content to agape. His love is searching. The value of the object of His love is unimportant. His love is value-creating.

God's grace is a manifestation of His love. Here again is salvation the area of concern. "By grace are ye saved."

The third area of God's concern is expressed in the word providence, which describes the process by which God's will for individuals is worked out and by which individuals become the special objects of His care. Man knows God by His providential acts, which he is able to discern by faith.

The whole question of revelation applies to this proposition, though it is involved in all of the propositions relating to the theology of missions. The fact of special revelation is presumed, and general or natural revelation is not excluded, except by the strict adherents to Barthian theology. The question of natural revelation is pertinent to the question of the Christian attitude toward non-Christian religions, which shall be discussed later.

The fourth proposition that applies to missionary theology is that all men stand in need of God's redemptive love. The question of the nature of man arises here. The doctrines of the fall of man and the depravity of man are not essential to this proposition. However, it is assumed that a man's life is incomplete until it has received God's redemptive love and has been saved by it. It is also assumed that no degree of depravity places man beyond the power of God's love to redeem Him.

God did not endow man with agape in creation. He endowed him with eros which is capable of receiving and being transformed by agape. Agape is essential to the nature of God, and is given to man when he becomes a new creature in Christ.

The doctrine that man was created in the likeness of God applies here. There are various ways of interpreting the doctrine of the image of God in man. It must mean at least that all men are so created that they have the faculty of responding to God's call and of growing in God's grace. This means that the gospel of redemption must be preached to all men, and that the Christian fellowship must offer them its mediating grace.

If men are capable of working out their own salvation without God's grace, even at the instance of "fear and trembling," then the edge of the missionary thrust is blunted.

The fifth proposition necessary to missionary theology is that the purpose of God in history is the ultimate realization of His kingdom. If the consumation of the kingdom is to be beyond history, the reality of the presence of the kingdom in history is not denied thereby. Christ came into the world and his coming was an actual historical event. He preached in Kairos but his preaching was an event in Kronos. His ministry of compassion belongs to history. His death was in time. His resurrection and ascension fulfilled time. His apostles labored in time. What He came to do will be accomplished in history, even if it is completed beyond history.

The missionary, like Christ and his apostles, must labor in history with the expectation that God will use his labors as means to accomplish His purpose to extend His kingdom on earth.

This last statement introduces the sixth proposition of missionary theology. The motive in Christian missions is the call of God for men to be workers with Him in the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose. There are lesser motives that compel men to become missionaries, but most of them are related to this purpose. Men have become missionaries to save the souls of others -- "to snatch brands from the burning." Still others have been moved by compassion to perform ministries of mercy. Various types of theology have undergirded their purpose: orthodox, neo-orthodox, fundamentalist, modernist, and all shades of liberalism, but the spirit of Christ preaching, "the Kingdom of God is at hand," has not been far from most of them.

It has been said that the lack of emphasis on the prospect of hell or the absence of it would negate the motive of Christian missions. This is theology in the negative mood. The Christian missionary can and must be positively motivated by the prospect of the kingdom of God which men may enter when they respond to God's call.

These six propositions are related to the task of the theologian to call attention to and explicate the doctrines of the Christian faith which require the missionary enterprise. The second task which might be called missionary apologetics comes as the missionaries enter upon their work and as they receive the questions of the non-Christian world. This is a task which, like the task of the Christian mission, will not be completed "until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ."

The Christian Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions

Included in the apologetic task of the missionary theologian is the problem of the Christian attitude toward non-Christian religions. When this problem is viewed from a safe distance where no contact is made with pious adherents of non-Christian religions, it may be solved theoretically by a parochial acceptance of the scriptural passages which affirm that there is no other way to salvation, except by faith in Jesus Christ. The missionaries themselves have felt the full force of the problem, because they have come in contact with some of the great representatives of non-Christian faiths. They find it difficult to answer the following questions in the affirmative. Are these men unsaved? Are these men strangers to fellowship with God? Are these men ignorant of all religious truth?

However, the starting point of consideration of the Christian attitude should not be questions concerning the spiritual welfare of non-Christians. Rather, it should be what attitudes are dictated by the Christian faith itself. Beginning at this point, it must first be affirmed that the Christian belief in the fundamental dignity of man as a creation of God requires tolerance. Tolerance creates the atmosphere in which a full inquiry can begin. The Christian says, "Here is a man who has a religious faith. He has a right to hold this faith. Since he is a man whom God has made, I must inquire into the nature of his faith." This attitude leads to the basic principle that the Christian doctrine of man demands respect for the integrity of the adherents of non-Christian religions.

Having accepted the integrity of devout men of other religions, all attitudes which regard these men as vicious, or blind leaders of the blind, or as ignorant, or as being completely deceived by the devil must be excluded.

The Christian faith that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, in the Bible, and in the Church does not rule out the possibility that God has revealed Himself to the rest of mankind. The Biblical conviction that all men are without excuse for their sins is not based on the absence of knowledge of the revealed will of God in the Law or in Christ, but it is based on their disobedience to the law of God written on their hearts. This certainly implies some knowledge of the will of God and His ethical requirements apart from special revelation. From the Biblical viewpoint, the Christian must admit not only the possibility, but also the reality of the non-Christian's knowledge of God. The value of the Christian revelation is not lessened by the recognition that God has also revealed Himself to men of non-Christian faith.

The Christian must also remind himself of the historical nature of his revealed knowledge of God. The prophets lived in a specific time and spoke the language of their day. Their religious truths have universal applicability, but they are historically conditioned. The same statement is true of the supreme revelatory event, the incarnation in Jesus Christ. This event was witnessed by men in a definite historical situation, and they bore their witness under specific historical conditions. The historical nature of the Christian revelation makes impossible that it was simultaneously known. It is the missionary's task to make it known, but when he is confronted by the non-Christian saint, his business is not to condemn, but to bear witness of the truth of God in Christ. The saints of non-Christian religions can stand in judgment upon many Christians because of the intensity of their quest for God, their rigid self-denial to implement their quest, and the passion with which they love God in the measure in which they have found Him.

However, all these considerations cannot mitigate the Christian's conviction of the ultimate and absolute nature of the revelation he has received from God. His conviction of the truth that Jesus Christ is the central symbol of his faith and the ultimate symbol of the universal faith of mankind compels him to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified for the sin of the world.

The missionary preaches the Gospel to non-Christians in humility as one who has a treasure in an "earthen vessel."

CHAPTER IV

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIANITY

The Authority of the Christian Faith

The question of authority for faith has always been a difficult one. For the purpose of formulating a theology of missions, the question of authority involves the basis for believing matters of ultimate concern. Matters of faith are formulated in principles and symbols and are embodied in Scripture, Church, Creed, worship, experience, fellowship, and practice. A religion may involve one or more forms for embodying its meaning to its adherents, and each embodiment has a degree of religious authority that makes a claim upon belief. How does one know that what he believes is true? What claim does what he believes have upon others? What is his responsibility for what he believes in relation to his belief's claim on others?

What is the authority of the Christian faith? Harris Franklin Rall has pointed out that there are 3 answers to the problem of authority in the Christian faith. First, there is the answer of relativism which regards truth as "humanly conditioned." The relativist surrenders the Christian claim to "uniqueness and finality." Such a surrender makes the "conviction of a living God who has revealed Himself in history" untenable.[1] Second, there is the answer of absolutism, which according to Dr. Rall is represented by Karl Barth, who has reduced the part of man in the God-man relation to a state of complete passivity.[2] The third answer is given by prophetic religion.

> Its ruling category as it thinks of God and man is that of the personal or moral personality. The supreme significance of the transcendence of God is sought, not in sovereign and all determining power, but in holy love, in redemptive purpose and in all action that flows from this.[3]

In prophetic religion there is both continuity and discontinuity, and the word of God becomes completed revelation when it reaches man.

The absolutist position described by Dr. Rall is not represented only by Karl Barth. This position is maintained by anyone who has found a source of authority for religious conviction which he regards as final and unique.[4] Absoluteness is maintained by those who find final authority in the Church, which, in turn, depends upon Scripture, tradition, belief in the direction of the Holy Spirit, and other criteria. Others find the source of final authority in the Bible alone. From one perspective, the Bible is regarded as the inerrant word of God. From another perspective, there is the confessional belief that the Bible contains the only infallible rule of faith and practice. These two perspectives are often confused, but do not mean the same thing. A third position regards Jesus Christ as the final revelation of God. A fourth position regards experience as the source of final authority.

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[1] Harris Franklin Rall, "The Authority of Our Faith," The International Review of Missions, XXIX (January, 1940), 132.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[4] Unique is used here in the sense of being unequaled.

Regardless of which source of final authority is accepted, all other authority bearing elements in religion have to be taken into account.

Terms with which this discussion is often carried forward are "continuity" and "discontinuity." A complete emphasis on continuity almost surely leads to relativism, and a complete emphasis on discontinuity leads to absolutism. There are, however, combinations of the two concepts which mitigate the dangers found in the two extremes.

Continuity

In a discussion of the authority of the faith, Henry P. Van Dusen concentrated almost entirely upon the concepts involved in "continuity" and "discontinuity."[5] He reviewed the positions taken by contributors to The Authority of the Faith which continued the discussion of unresolved issues in the Madras Conference.[6] Dr. Van Dusen identified the preaching of the evangelistic message with discontinuity. The preaching message emphasizes those elements of the Christian faith which are regarded as unique and these elements are inevitably contrasted with the religious situation (or lack of it) of the hearer. This preaching is designed to convert so that the Christian message appears to be completely new to the convert. When the convert is received into the Christian fellowship, he is instructed more fully in the faith. In this relationship the contrast between the old and the new is not sharp.[7] He wrote, "But fidelity to objective truth requires us to recognize that the contrast is neither so drastic nor so absolute, the anticipation of Christ not so inconsequential or even nonexistent, as the new believer testifies."[8] Dr. Van Dusen's position is essentially defined by the concept of "continuity."

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[5] Henry P. Van Dusen, World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), pp. 189-207.

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[6] The Authority of the Faith, "The Madras Series," Presenting Papers Based Upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), Vol. I.

[7] Van Dusen, op. cit., pp. 205-207.

[8] Ibid., p. 207.

Uniqueness with Continuity

Edmund D. Soper has taken a position which may be described as uniqueness with continuity. The uniqueness of Christianity is in Jesus Christ.

> . . . But it is in Jesus Christ that God made so complete a revelation of himself and of his character and did it so unmistakably that nothing like it has ever occurred at any other time or in any other place. A Christian stakes all he has and is on Jesus Christ.[9]

God in Christ

The same emphasis on the revelation of God in Christ was made by Luther A. Weigle. The principles of the teachings of Jesus, especially his ethical teachings, are not "ideal aspirations of his own." These virtues are true because "they lie at the heart of the universe. God has these qualities."[10]

In describing his spiritual pilgrimage, John A. Mackay described his journey from a strongly Christ-centered experience to a religious-centered social ethic, and back to a Christ-centered experience and theology. Characteristically for him, the validation of the character of God was not made by Jesus, but rather Christ was made real by God's revelation of Him. He wrote, "The heart of Christianity I saw to be not Christ's revelation of God, but God's revelation of Christ."[11]

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[9] Edmund Davidson Soper, The Philosophy of the Christian World Missions (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 228.

[10] Luther A. Weigle, "The Purpose of Missions," (Chapter VIII), The Christian Message for the World Today; A Joint Statement of the World-Wide Mission of the Christian Church (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1934), p. 170.

The necessity for faith in the perception of Jesus as the Christ has also been emphasized by Dr. Mackay.

> . . . God incarnated Himself in Jesus for a redemptive and creative task, so that he was uniquely the Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh, but only to the specially sensitized eye of faith which pierces behind appearances and beholds the unseen and unseeable. To any other eye, even the most sympathetic and religious eye, as it gazes upon the man of Galilee, He will appear as the greatest religious figure of history . . . .[12]

For Nels F. S. Ferré, the Incarnation is the source of God's final revelation of Himself. He has said, "Jesus is God's unique and absolute revelation because he discloses and makes effective the agape of God."[13] In his thought, the form of God is His personality and the content of the form is agape. In form Jesus was human, but in essence (content) he was agape.[14] This doctrine also includes an emphasis upon a correct relation between continuity and discontinuity. As human Jesus was continuous with humanity, but his status as Son of God can only be understood in terms of radical discontinuity.[15] The _agape_ of God dwelt in him. "In form we all share divinity of nature. In Jesus, God's _agape_ which is His very nature visited man in matchless fullness."[16]

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[11] John A. Mackay, "The Gospel in Our Generation," (Chapter V), The Christian Message for the World Today, p. 103.

[12] Ibid., p. 114.

[13] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Faith, An Inquiry Into Its Adequacy as Man's Ultimate Religion (New York: Harper & Brothers), p. 102.

[14] Cf. ibid., pp. 99-116.

For Paul Tillich the final revelation is in Jesus as the Christ. "Jesus of Nazareth is the medium of the final revelation because he sacrifices himself completely to Jesus as the Christ."[17] As in the case of all other revelation, so in final revelation, revelation depends upon reception. "Jesus as the Christ, the miracle of the final revelation, and the church, receiving him as the Christ or the final revelation, belong to each other."[18] This doctrine lifts Christ out of all relativities, and makes him the absolute of faith.

The Bible

The Bible is an authority-bearing element in Christianity. For some, the Bible has become the central and final authority in religion. It has been accepted as the inerrant word of God, and as such it becomes the unquestioned basis for faith and practice. In many cases, faith is a matter of precisely defined beliefs and practice is a legalistic conformity to the stated requirements of the Bible.

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[15] _Ibid._, p. 129.

[16] _Ibid._, pp. 100, 101.

[17] Paul Tillich, _Systematic Theology_ (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 136.

[18] _Ibid._, p. 137.

The Inerrant Bible

Harold Lindsell has made the inerrant Bible central to Christian philosophy and theology.[19] The focal point of the Biblical revelation is the Incarnation.[20] God made Himself known in Jesus Christ, but the knowledge of this revelation is dependent upon the Bible. Thus, "the Bible becomes for the Christian the absolute; the norm."[21] The whole Bible has to be accepted as the Word of God because, if part of it could be rejected, then man would become the judge of revelation.[22] Dr. Lindsell has not taken this position without being aware of its difficulties. He has recognized that there are conflicts between Biblical facts and the conclusions of modern science. His position is that science has been proven wrong and will be again, and that, when all the returns are in, the truth of the Bible will be validated.[23]

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[19] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy in Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: 1949), p. 57.

[20] Ibid., p. 51.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 53.

[23] Ibid., p. 56.

The difficulty with this position is that the supreme authority, the disclosure of God in Jesus Christ, has to be validated by a book that is inerrant in all of its parts. According to the logic of this position, if the recorded events of the Exodus, for example, could be proved to be incorrect, the truth of the Incarnation would be placed in doubt.

Christ in the Bible

John A. Mackay has quoted Martin Luther who said, "I believe in the Bible, because I believe in Christ."[24] Thus, it is with point that James Newton Thomas has observed that the fundamentalist position has resulted from the error of the "secondary Reformers."[25] Reliance upon the Bible as "an external and objective" authority based upon the inspiration of its writers by the Holy Spirit has eliminated the witness of the Spirit which should validate the revelation both to the writers and the readers.[26]

Secularism and Revelation

Dr. Mackay has further defined the issue in regard to the Bible which has been subjected to historical criticism and which has had many statements challenged by science.

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[24] John A. Mackay, "The Gospel and Our Generation," (Chapter V), The Christian Message for the World Today, p. 109.

[25] James Newton Thomas, "The Authority of the Bible," Theology Today, III (July, 1946), 170.

[26] Ibid.

> This issue has really nothing to do with either science or history, but with a world-view which is obliged by its assumptions to reject the conception of a special absolute revelation of God in history.[27]

The authority of the Bible does not depend on its proved correctness in all facts and statements of whatever nature, but on the religious presupposition that God can and has made Himself and His will known in time. This issue of the possibility of final revelation not only affects the authority of the Bible, but the Christian concept of incarnation as well. The secular world-view has to be broken through before the validity of revelation as coming from God can be received.

Religious Relativism

The areas where religious relativism has affected the theological basis for the missionary enterprise are defined elsewhere in this study. One illustration will be sufficient to implement this discussion of the authority of the faith. One basis for the authority of the faith advocated by many people has been the pragmatic test expressed in the proverb, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Secularism has tended to judge religion by this test, but in doing so it has used its own concept of progress as a standard. There is relevance, therefore, to the quotation by Floyd H. Ross of the remarks of Radhakrishnan.

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[27] John A. Mackay, "The Gospel and Our Generation," (Chapter V), The Christian Message for the World Today, p. 110.

> . . . Let us frankly recognize that the efficiency of a religion is to be judged by the development of religious qualities such as quiet confidence, inner calm, gentleness of spirit, love of neighbors, mercy to all creation, destruction of tyrannous desires, and the aspiration for spiritual freedom, and there are no trustworthy statistics to tell us that these qualities are found more in efficient nations.[28]

Dr. Ross, however, has quoted Radhakrishnan for the purpose of implementing his theory that there is no absolute symbol through which religious truth is mediated. "'Grace' is in all History."[29] His position points up the folly of validating the authority of the Christian faith by the "fruit" of life. From a religious standpoint, what is regarded as good is valued in terms of the standards required by the central symbol of faith. Thus, what for a Christian would be accepted as validation of his faith in the power of a Christian life, would not necessarily impel a devotee of a non-Christian religion to accept the authority of the Christian faith. This is not to deny, however, that the appeal to the Christian life has been and will continue to be tremendously effective in Christian world evangelism.

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[28] Floyd H. Ross, "Religion and World Community," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XVII, No. 4 (October, 1949), 229. (Quoted from S. Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, pp. 323-324).

[29] Ibid., p. 229.

Faith and Reason

Before the authority of the faith can be established, a satisfactory relation between faith and reason has to be worked out. The authority of the faith depends also upon the correlation of faith and reason. Nels F. S. Ferré has seen religion as the response to Reality. His thesis has been stated thus, "Right religion is right response to Reality; right reason is the right interpretation of it."[30] The presupposition of this position is an experienced relationship with Reality. The function of reason is to apprehend and interpret the relationship. Difficulty is soon encountered, because "Reality does not present itself with a clear countenance."[31] Reason is a function of the mind, and the mind must purify itself for its task by a complete love for God. This is "an intellectual task, which obviously no man can fulfill."[32]

Revelation is a form of irrationality which is necessary in the perception of religious truth because natural reason "is positively misleading"[33] and because revelation viewed as the extension of reason does not provide "a unity of discourse between revelation and reason" which undergirds all thought "with a gripping security."[34] The function of revelation is to show men "God and salvation."[35] Faith brings man into a situation in which God can and does reveal Himself, because man's affirmation of belief

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[30] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Reason Must Become Religious," Theology Today, I (1944, 1945), 474.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 475.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 476.

> . . . means that he has experienced the judgment of God's incomparable love, found his natural self condemned, and accepted the goodness of God which leads to repentance, forgiveness, and faith.[36]

The authority of faith is thus firmly established on God's revelation of Himself and His salvation to man.

The authority of the Christian faith for Reinhold Niebuhr is found in the truth of the Gospel, but this truth "is not subject to simple rational validation because it stands beyond the ambiguities of human existence."[37] The wisdom of the world can only result in complacency or despair,[38] and the world tends toward complacency.[39] Both possible ends of worldly wisdom fail to give an adequate view of life,[40] and reason cannot move "from despair to hope or transmute remorse into repentance."[41] The truth of the Gospel is thus partially validated from a negative perspective by this failure of wisdom and reason. Further, the truth of the Gospel is partially validated from a positive perspective

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 482.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 483-484.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 482.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 485. Cf. "The basic difference between faith and reason is rather a living decision . . . . The difference between faith and reason is definitely not between reason as seeing and faith as refusing to see, but between reason insisting on what is and faith used to describe a world which ought to be in the light of some selectively actual ideal which is taken by it to be real beyond what here and now is observed aggregatively actual." Nels F. S. Ferré, "Faith and Reason," *Christendom*, VIII (Spring, 1943), p. 219.

> . . . when the truth of faith is correlated with all trends which may be known by scientific and philosophical discipline and proves itself a resource for coordinating them into a deeper and wider system of coherence.[42]

There are two truths which can be known only by revelation and which are embarrassing to rationality. These are the doctrines of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ.

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[37] Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Validation of the Christian View of Life and History," Theology Today, VI (April, 1949), 31.

[38] Ibid., p. 33.

[39] Ibid., p. 35.

[40] Ibid., p. 42.

[41] Ibid., p. 44.

[42] Ibid., p. 32.

The doctrine of the Trinity is necessary "in faith's apprehension of the mercy of God," and to what is otherwise known about God.[43] The effort to fit Christ "into some general scheme of the history of culture"[44] places him in the area of worldly wisdom which can only lead to complacency or despair. The meaning of Christ is found in his revelation of "suffering agape of which the Cross is the supreme symbol."[45] At this point the life of Christ ceases to be a story in history

> . . . and becomes revelatory of a very unique divine "glory" namely the glory and majesty of a suffering God whose love and forgiveness is the final triumph over the recalcitrance of human sin and the confusion of human history.
>
> That history is fulfilled and ended in this *agape* of God as revealed in Christ, is the basic affirmation of the Christian faith.[46]

Dr. Niebuhr has not related this analysis of the relation of the Christian faith and history to the theology of missions. However, it is clear that he has related the authority of the faith to its significance as a principle of explanation of the riddle of human history. Another religion would fail the test which he has given Christianity.

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

From this viewpoint, the authority of the Christian faith is supreme and the missionary imperative must draw its vitality from this source.

The Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit in validating the authority bearing elements of the Christian faith has been mentioned. The work of the Holy Spirit has been emphasized by Edward Jurji in his discussion of the "Christian impact" in non-Christian lands.

> . . . To raise the issue of a Christian impact is to ask whether anything distinctive and pulsating about the Christian religion really exists and may be communicated.[47]

The impact occurs "when the truth of God shines through the human instrumentality,"[48] and forces upon those who see it "the absolute urgency and pertinence of what was wrought in Jesus Christ."[49] The living force of the impact is "the Holy Spirit, ever in sovereign control."[50] Thus in Dr. Jurji's view the authority of Christianity is in Jesus Christ, and this authority is validated and implemented by the Holy Spirit through human instrumentality.[51]

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[47] Edward Jurji, "The Impact of Christianity Upon the Middle East," Theology Today, VIII (April, 1951), 56.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[50] *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Issues involved in the authority of the faith recur in other problems affecting the theological basis for Christian missions. Questions raised by the responsibility imposed on one who finds a basis of authority for his faith will be discussed under the title, "The Motive for Missions."

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[51] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

CHAPTER V

ATTITUDE TOWARD NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

There is a growing volume of literature, both scholarly and popular, in the field of the history of religions. There are increasing numbers of Americans who have a first-hand knowledge of people who are adherents of non-Christian faiths as a result of military service, increased world travel by tourists, and expanding business enterprises. The resulting inter-penetration of cultures has necessarily affected the attitude of people toward other religions and thereby toward Christian missions. The popular attitude has affected and will continue to affect the Christian missionary enterprise. The concern of this study, however, is to discover the attitudes of Christian scholars toward non-Christian religions and to determine how these attitudes affect Christian missions.

Types of Attitudes

Joachim Wach has pointed out three types of attitudes which are being taken by Christian religious leaders. First, there is the disregard of the material available in the field of non-Christian religions. In the second place, there is a denial of the value of non-Christian religious experience.

In the third place, there is a careful consideration of non-Christian religions and their challenge to currently held religious viewpoints.[1] The positive reaction to the study of non-Christian religions has taken three forms:

> (a) Acknowledgement of the existence of a (some) grain of truth in or hidden under these expressions of religious experience, coupled with the superiority of the Christian claim; (b) the conclusion that the several expressions of religious experience are equally valid and that hence the Christian should be regarded as one among many faiths, possibly the one especially adapted to the religious quest of those reared in its tradition or the environment which produced it; (c) a skeptical attitude which draws from the study of religions the conclusion that the truth is not to be found in any of them.[2]

A different basis for approach to the problem of determining attitude toward non-Christian religions has been made by Hugh Vernon White who classified all religions under four heads: "(1) primitive, (2) ethnic, (3) national, and (4) universal."[3] Under this classification only the universal religions can be regarded as candidates for becoming the world faith. The universal-type religions are Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Universal-type religions are characterized by "the claim that they have the truth about the spiritual nature of man and the universe in which he lives."[4] This truth is greater than cultural expression because it is related to Reality. The basic attitude is one of rivalry.

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[1] Joachim Wach, "The Place of the History of Religion in the Study of Theology," The Journal of Religion, XXVII (July, 1947), 158.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Hugh Vernon White, A Working Faith for the World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 24.

> Universal religions, therefore, are inevitably rivals. No matter how much the Buddhist, the Moslem and the Christian love each other -- and by the tenets of at least two of these they should love each other -- no matter how much they appreciate and admire certain particular things in the other faiths, the fact remains that each must challenge the others at certain points as either untrue or only partially and inadequately true.[5]

Man, however, is not helpless in the presence of conflicting claims of truth, because, by the use of "intelligence and spiritual insight," he has the faculties for judging the claims to revelation and truth.[6] The Christian faith can be presented, according to Dr. White, on its merits with the confidence that its superiority can be proven.

A note of warning has been sounded by F. Scott Thompson who has noted that it is easy to go to the extreme in praising or condemning other religions. Since the view from which many Christians have turned condemned other religions uncritically, it is imperative that Christians do not now become uncritically tolerant.[7] The Christian should recognize all good in the teaching of other religions, and regard their followers as "brothers to be won."[8]

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[7] F. Scott Thompson, "The Future of Missions," *The International Review of Missions*, XXII (July, 1933), 389.

Two Basic Propositions

Most critical attitudes toward non-Christian religions can be derived from either of two general propositions. First, Christianity is in some manner the final faith which ultimately will displace all other religions, although it may appropriate much truth and many practices from other religions while in the process of displacing them. Second, it must be recognized that a fundamental religious truth is shared by all the great religions of the world, and that these religions have been produced by the same processes at work among all men everywhere.

The concept of revelation provides the framework for these two propositions. The term general revelation is used in this study to indicate the evidences of God's activity and will which are generally available to intelligent observers and honest seekers after the truth wherever they may be. Under this category may be subsumed those who interpret revelational phenomena in purely naturalistic terms, or those who see these same phenomena as being the result of the providential work of God. The term particular revelation is used to describe God's special revelational acts whether through prophetic insight, a revelatory event, an inspired book, or the life of a person.

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[8] Ibid.

There are at least three positions which may be subscribed to in relation to revelation, and which affect one's attitude toward non-Christian religions. First, it is possible to accept general revelation only as a means to religious truth. Second, it is possible to add particular revelation to general revelation. Third, one may accept only particular revelation and deny validity to general revelation.

General Revelation Only:
Christian Exclusiveness Rejected

Within the framework of the idea of general revelation only, the exclusiveness of Christianity is denied. Phillips Endicott Osgood has written:

> No dictatorial or authoritarian "revelation" can now be tolerated. Bibliolators are vetoed by today's common sense . . . . Do even liberal Christians dare to say that they would be willing or happy that Christianity should lose its regal name and specific identity in a new emergent world faith?[9]

The same author has expressed a hope for "a new Bible -- a Bible of World Faith." This Bible should contain "the winnowed wisdom of all religions," and the "unofficial" anthologies now on the market look forward to such a new Bible. He has failed to indicate how such a Bible could ever become official. Such goals, however, as an emergent world faith and a Bible of World Faith, indicate an attitude of respect for "the major non-Christian religions of the world."[10]

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[9] Phillips Endicott Osgood, Religion Without Magic (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1954), p. 98.

According to Archibald G. Baker, the religions of the world have been produced by the same process, and for this reason Christianity cannot claim a "special miraculous origin."[11] He has written:

> According to this interpretation, the missionary enterprise is the effort of the Christian Church to influence this exchange of cultural elements, good and bad, in such a manner as shall result to the greatest benefit to those who have fallen behind in the march of progress, and also to the building of a better world to which the whole human family may contribute and within which each race may find its fullest development.[12]

Dr. Baker has also voiced the warning that Christians should avoid the attitude of superiority and adopt an attitude commensurate with "the great basic facts of common origin and mutual dependence."[13] Rival claims should not be made by rival religions on the basis of "unverified and unverifiable pretensions."[14] Christian missionaries should therefore abandon "all claims to absolutism and finality," and engage in a cooperative search for truth.[15]

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[10] Ibid., pp. 92-96.

[11] Archibald G. Baker, Christian Missions and a New World Culture (Chicago: Willet, Clark & Co., 1934), p. 291.

[12] Ibid., p. 293.

[13] Ibid., p. 294.

The difficulty in abandoning a claim of superiority in relation to other religions is indicated by the phrase, "those who have fallen behind in the march of progress," which clearly assumes that Christian culture is in the forward detachment in "the march of progress."

The term "progressive revelation" has been frequently applied to developments within Old and New Testaments. John Clark Archer has applied the term to the religions of the world.[16] The tendency of such an application is to deny the finality of the Christian revelation, though Jesus may be presented, as Dr. Archer has presented him, as the manifestation of the "Wisdom which the world must recognize at last."[17] This affirmation of the superiority of Jesus, however, is not to be construed as an indication of the exclusiveness of Christianity.

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

16. John Clark Archer, "The World Mission and the World Church," *Religion in Life*, XXII (Spring, 1953), 184-194.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

> . . . We have suggested tolerance of certain forms which manifest a local or communal need and interest as men have sought the Highest Good within the providence of God, if only such forms be not considered final as the exclusive means of saving men.[18]

Charles W. Iglehart has drawn the issue between religion and non-religion in the modern world. The mission of Christianity must not be opposed to other faiths. Rather, Christianity must fight "for the recovery of any religious faith at all in a modern world of pagan practice."[19]

Floyd H. Ross has based his rejection of the exclusiveness of Christianity on the grounds that the claim to be "the only way" "betrays a lack of faith and an undue reliance upon certain scriptural passages."[20] However, his claim is actually more far-reaching. For him there can be no actual superiority in religion and no religion can claim absoluteness. "There is no overwhelming evidence that God works through any one historic channel, or idiom, or tradition more potently than through others."[21]

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[19] Charles W. Iglehart, "The Christian Mission on Today's Frontiers," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, IV (January, 1949), 9.

[20] Floyd H. Ross, "A Re-examination of Christian Attitudes Toward Other Faiths," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXI (April, 1953), 81.

[21] Floyd H. Ross, "The Christian Imperative," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XIX (January, 1951), 3.

The Christian claim to a central religious symbol in Jesus Christ which will ultimately fulfill all other religions is also rejected. Each religion has such a symbol which is able to serve as an objective reference for the subjective demands of its adherents, and "there is no evidence that any religion or religious symbol has a corner" on this ability.[22]

Even the Christian claim to superiority on the basis of its personalism is rejected because a personal God can be a threat to the neurotic person who has "failed at the level of his personal relatedness."[23] The human situation demands a plural approach to the healing religion offers. "Hence there can be no such thing as an absolute religion."[24] This statement seems to deny the desirability of a world faith, and the position taken undoubtedly puts all religions on the same level.

The views expounded by Dr. Ross not only deny Christian absoluteness, but also reject the historic presuppositions on which the Christian doctrine of salvation is predicated. He has disclaimed that this surrender of absoluteness necessitates the surrender of grounds for effective missionary activity,[25] but he has failed to say what those grounds are. His "Christian imperative" seems to be found in the need for "a generous exchange of honest seekers between the various religions."[26]

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[22] Ibid., p. 4.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 5.

Protests against the tendency of Christianity to formulate its belief in creeds, and to require conformity to them and other religious practices often accompanies a protest against exclusiveness in Christianity. This tendency is illustrated in an article written by Albert E. Suthers.

> The church clearly caught the vision of an internationalism in Christ arising out of the realization of our oneness of blood. A further vision is yet to be had of another communion -- a brotherhood not physical, not conditioned by intellectual interpretation, conformity of practice, or a standardized experience, but a fellowship founded upon respect for the varied and universal findings of the human spirit in its strivings for truth.[27]

The failure of Christianity to attain this vision was set by Dr. Suthers over against the tolerance of Hinduism and Buddhism. He did not take into account the rigid caste system on which the greater part of Hinduism is founded, nor the requirements that Buddhists who have any hope of attaining Nirvana in their present lifetime must live under the discipline of the order. It seems that religion will allow latitude in creed and practice, or in social structure, but not in both.

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[25] Ibid., p. 3.

[26] Ibid., p. 6.

[27] Albert E. Suthers, "East and West: A Study in Irenica," The Journal of Religion, XII (April, 1932), 233.

Dr. Suthers also expressed fear that the adherents of these ancient religions might be "converted even as we have been, and postpone yet farther the day of the Lord."[28]

It is further worthy of note that Dr. Suthers placed the responsibility for the exclusiveness of Christianity upon the Gospel of John, which the church followed instead of the "human simple Synoptics."[29] He did not take note of the work of Rev. Karl Ludvig Reichelt, missionary specialist in Buddhism, who has found the Gospel of John very helpful in his approach to Buddhism. Dr. Reichelt has used the Chinese "Tao" as an equivalent of St. John's "Logos."[30]

Professor William Ernest Hocking has influenced Christian theology in the direction of relativism and its consequent abandonment of the idea of the uniqueness of the Christian religion. This does not mean that Dr. Hocking has no sense of the absoluteness of the religious experience, or that he has not recognized the danger of relativism. His was the dominating influence in the report of the Laymen's Foreign Mission Inquiry which published Re-thinking Missions. (This work has already been discussed.) The work done by the commission which was headed by Dr. Hocking, called the attention of everyone interested in the Christian Faith to the issues involved in the Christian world mission. He discussed the issue further in speeches and articles for periodicals, and finally summed up his position in the Hibbert Lectures, published under the title, Living Religions and a World Faith. In all of these expressions relating to the Christian faith, his approach has been that of the philosopher of religion and not that of a Christian theologian. The total force of the positions taken has denied the uniqueness and the exclusiveness of the Christian faith.

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[28] Ibid., p. 241.

[29] Ibid., p. 242.

[30] William Ernest Hocking, "Christianity and Intercultural Contacts," The Journal of Religion, XIV (April, 1934), 128.

Dr. Hocking has shown a vital interest in the development of a world faith, and has defined three ways by which this goal might be attained.[31] In his discussion of these problems, he has clearly shown his attitude toward non-Christian religions. In his rejection of "the way of radical displacement," he has rejected the idea of absoluteness, and therefore of the exclusiveness of Christianity. In his rejection of "the way of synthesis," he has shown the dangers involved in relativism and the folly of supposing that all religions are of equal value.

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[31] William Ernest Hocking, Living Religions and a World Faith (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), pp. 139-208.

Dr. Hocking has found the solution to the problem in "the way of Reconception." This way is predicated on the proposition that each religion has its own peculiar essence, and that these essences are not radically different from each other. Adherents of each faith must reconceive their religion from the point of view required by modern life. This is done by a discovery of the essence or generating principle of the religious life. The process is never ended, because "for every Reconception there is conceivably a better one to be had."[32]

The process of Reconception results in a growing unity of religions, because

> In proportion as any religion grows in self understanding through grasping its own essence, it grasps the essence of all religions, and gains in power to interpret its own forms.[33]

The world mission of Christianity should, according to Dr. Hocking, make provision for the representatives of the various faiths to sit down together in a cooperative effort to find the truth and a common basis for worship and action. The purpose of such discussion would be neither to proselyte nor to seek to diminish the number of religions, but for each religion "to become a better vehicle of truth."[34]

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Basic to the way of Reconception is the conviction that Christianity is not yet prepared to serve as a world faith. It has much to learn from the great living religions as well as much to teach. Christianity also needs to reduce the gap between its idealism and its actuality.

If Christianity were to absorb into itself the essences of other faiths, would it still be Christianity? Or is it any longer needful that there be a single name over all?[35]

It may be concluded that Dr. Hocking's basic position is religious relativism, but such a conclusion is not justified. The Christian religion as presently conceived and practiced is relative to its own ultimate nature, and is relative to whatever is ultimate in religion.

In describing the influence of intercultural contacts upon Christianity, Dr. Hocking has pointed out the deadening influence of nineteenth century liberalism on missionary zeal, "because it simply means that the religion of the other man is the proper religion for him, and that the real type of universality which we seek is the universality of thought."[36]

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[34] Ibid., p. 201.

[35] Ibid., p. 264.

[36] Ibid., p. 131.

He has shown further that modernism, which succeeded liberalism, has dealt even a more severe blow to missions because of its claim that all religions are "subject to growth and decay." Since it is the function of religion to save men from ultimate relativity, modernism makes the essential claim of religion "fallacious, if not fraudulent."[37]

On the face of it, this position seems to contradict the position which Dr. Hocking took in advocating the way of Reconception. Yet, it is not an actual contradiction because, for Dr. Hocking, relativism in religion is confined to man's conception of it. The actuality of religion can be experienced. Over against the relativism of liberalism and modernism, Dr. Hocking has set Albert Einstein's theory of relativity which "implies that there is a physical absolute which can be reduced to a single formula."[38] Religion has this same kind of absolute in the "right relation between man and the cosmos on which he lives."[39]

> The element of absolute finality cannot be incorporated in any written word external to the individual, in any institution external to him, in any person external to him . . . . The word of God is individually addressed.[40]

This experience is not in a vacuum, for there is a

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37. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

38. Ibid., p. 132.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p. 133.

"necessity for every man of that which is historical for him."[41] Yet, this religious empiricism has no place for any kind of valid objective reference for the word of God addressed to the individual. There is therefore no basis for the uniqueness of any religion, except the religion of the individual.

The attitude toward other religions which one would learn from Dr. Hocking would be a broad tolerance, based not on indifference, but on the earnest expectation of each individual to learn the truth and, knowing it, to add to the religious welfare of his fellowman.

Religion in Religions

Another basis for the rejection of the exclusiveness of Christianity is the isolation of the essence of religion which is found in the religions of the world. A phrase often used to describe this position is "Religion in Religions." This reality of religion is basic to the position of Dr. Hocking which has just been described. The concept of general revelation only provides the theological framework for the attitudes toward non-Christian religions taken by those who subscribe to this principle.

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[41] _Ibid._, p. 138.

The principle is well stated by Roland Emerson Wolfe. He has written, "As there is only one mathematics, one physics, one chemistry, and one biology, so there is only one religion."[42] This one religion is not to be identified with any of the world's living religions.[43] The "vital heart" of all religions is "that living nucleus which is common to all religions."[44] There are four fundamentals of religion: (1) belief in God as creator; (2) providence; (3) prayer, (4) ethical man.[45] It is fundamentally atheism in any religion which only recognizes itself as valid, because "this implies that God's activity does not extend to other groups."[46] Religion thus universally conceived would unite rather than divide men, and, if it had been operative, it could have "pioneered in bringing in brotherhood among the peoples of the earth."[47] This brotherhood would have undergirded the United Nations with a United Religions of the World.[48]

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[42] Roland Emerson Wolfe, "Higher Perspectives in Religion," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XVI (April, 1948), 76.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 77.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., p. 78.

[48] Ibid.

Dr. Wolfe concluded this article with the following statement of need:

> We need a generation of religious people whose minds are attuned to God for the interpretation of new truth. Only so can religion take its place among the sciences.[49]

One comment will illustrate the difficulty of identifying the "living nucleus of religion." The four elements which Dr. Wolfe identified as constituting the essence of "real religion" would not be acceptable to a non-theistic faith.

It is interesting to note that he also protested the misrepresentation of Jesus in John's Gospel.

> To boast that Christianity alone can save the world hardly displays a spirit that can minister to this present age. It is not true to Jesus, except as he is misrepresented in the fourth gospel.[50]

The idea of Religion in religions has also been set forth by John Clark Archer. In discussing the Great Commission of Matthew XXVII, he stated,

> There is a gospel for us to "teach all nations" in terms of their own ideals; and in extending their ideals we may continue faithful to the gospel Jesus lived and taught.[51]

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 77. (Note: The depreciation of the Christ of the Gospel of John in favor of the Jesus of the Synoptic gospels has been discredited by recent New Testament criticism.)

[51] John Clark Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

> I contend . . . for a final recognition among the devotees of all religions for what is universal in Religion.[52]

In this position, Dr. Archer does not advocate "missions" "which merely substitute one system of religion for another." His purpose is to "identify and advocate Religion,"[53] and this purpose means that he recognizes the validity of non-Christian religions. He has changed the center of emphasis in the Great Commission from the explicit purpose of "making disciples of all nations" to implementing the religious quality of all religions.

Edwin T. Settle has added his voice to the call to unify man by Religion which pervades religions. He has attempted to avoid the "easy answers" such as an ethical statement of the Golden Rule.[54] He quoted from T. R. Glover in his Jesus of History in which he said that Christianity supplanted the religions of the Roman Empire because it "out-thought," "out-lived," and "out-died" them.[55] In our present age, man's ingenuity in transportation has transformed the world into a neighborhood. The missionary task is to change the "neighborhood into a brotherhood."[56] His concept of the missionary task in terms of the Christian attitude toward other religions is seen in the following statement:

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[54] Edwin T. Settle, "Religion and One World," *Religion in Life*, XXIII (Spring, 1954), 249.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

> Perhaps we need worry less about turning Moslems and Buddhists into Christians than about convincing the growing number of secularly minded in all lands that there is a God of Truth and Love whom we ignore at our peril, and through whose worship alone we can find lasting peace and joy.[57]

This program of missions, based on a view that Christianity should make common cause with other worthy religions in a fight against secularism, does not need, according to Dr. Settle, to conflict with the missionary's loyalty to his own faith. The whole position set forth by Dr. Settle presumes that there is a Religion of one's personal relationship with God in all religions, and this Religion is the basis for mutual respect, appreciation, and cooperative action.

Daniel J. Fleming has made a practical approach to the problem of the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions. He has described numerous occasions when devout Christians have come into spiritual relation with non-Christians in order to call attention to the fact "that concrete, living situations may have their contribution to make toward one's philosophy of religions."[58] The force of this article is that when one recognizes an authentic religious spirit in a non-Christian, he must recognize it as such; that when people pray sincerely, the promise, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him," must be remembered; and that when people approach God in non-Christian worship, no one can say that they are in touch with nothing or worse than nothing.[59]

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Daniel J. Fleming, "Life Situations and Non-Christian Religions," Theology Today, XII (July, 1955), 225.

After describing the various religious symbols on the library building of a theological seminary on the Pacific coast, Dr. Fleming said,

> The general meaning here is that all religions are expressions of religion; that there is a solidarity in man's religious experience; and yet that Christianity is the crown of God's dealing with men.[60]

General and Particular Revelation

It has been seen that general revelation provides the framework for recognizing validity in non-Christian religions. When general revelation is accepted as the only basis of religious truth, the uniqueness or exclusiveness of Christianity is unacceptable. Particular revelation provides a basis for the uniqueness of Christianity and the belief that

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[59] Ibid., p. 221.

[60] Ibid., p. 224.

Christian revelation will be the basis of any ultimate world faith, or is, at least, the basis for seeking to convert adherents of non-Christian faith to Christianity. A recognition of the validity of both kinds of revelation provides the basis for the thinking of many contemporary American theologians. This area of revelation offers a wider latitude for difference of opinion, but makes possible the recognition of validity and value in other religions, together with a conviction that the Christian faith makes the final claim on men's lives.

The position which one takes in which he adequately recognizes the validity of non-Christian religions and at the same time is true to the Christian faith is usually found with great difficulty. A description of inner conflict at this point is found in a chapter by Walter Marshall Horton entitled "Between Hocking and Kraemer."[61] It might well have been entitled "The Confessions of Walter Marshall Horton." Dr. Horton had been strongly influenced by Dr. Hocking and Re-thinking Missions. He had taken a rather extreme liberal position which he called his "Hocking-self." His attitude in 1932, the year of the publication of Re-thinking Missions, was described in these words:

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[61] The Madras Series: Vol. I, "The Authority of the Faith," (New York: The International Missionary Council, 1939), pp. 137-149.

> In their combat with secularism and materialism that have engulfed the modern world, all men of whatever religious faith are natural allies.[62]

> The very word /Revelation/ was absent from my theological vocabulary . . . .[63]

By the time of the Madras Conference in December, 1939, his liberalism was shaken by "the rise of the new paganism,"[64] and by the work of Karl Barth and other continental theologians. In his attitude toward non-Christian religions, he had been especially challenged by The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World by Hendrik Kraemer.[65] He called his new position his "Kraemer-self."

His "Hocking-self" continued to challenge his "Kraemer-self."

> Hesitation begins when I confront Kraemer's doctrine that the great eastern faiths are to be interpreted, in the main, as various forms of self-deification, resulting from man's inveterate propensity to carry his drive up to the transcendental level, until at last he claims partnership with the gods themselves . . . . But Dr. Kraemer himself admits that the same sinful pride has played and is playing its part in the history of Christianity . . . . How then is it possible to draw so sharp a distinction as Kraemer draws

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[62] Ibid., p. 189.

[63] Ibid., p. 142.

[64] Ibid., p. 140. He refers here especially to the nationalistic paganism of blood and soil.

[65] Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: The International Missionary Council, 1939).

> between the prophetic religion of revelation and all other religions, as though the former alone represented God's word to man, and the latter were simply man's vain and presumptuous attempt to scale the heavens.[66]

The limitation of Dr. Kraemer's view is that, following Karl Barth, he does not make sufficient allowance for general revelation. Though his position allows for no arrogance in the Christian attitude toward other religions, he cannot accept the fact that whatever is good in them (and he sees the good) is founded on genuine revelation.[67]

Dr. Horton represents those liberals who discovered that they had too easily surrendered the center of faith, which is Jesus Christ, by their uncritical assumption that all religions had an authentic center of loyalty. The "new paganism" taught them that ancient biblical truth that it is sinful to raise the false or the finite to the absolute.

The dilemma has not been resolved for Dr. Horton,

> I am for Barth and Kraemer when they insist that even the highest mystical illumination may act as a bar instead of a gateway to the truth as it is in Christ, which is only to be reached through the lowly gate-way of repentance; but I am against them when they use language which seems to deny

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[66] Horton, op. cit., p. 146.

[67] Dr. Kraemer's position, following Karl Barth, allows for "token revelation" which allows for "a faint gleam of something that might be called a genuine divine self-utterance." Ibid., p. 147.

> that God's power and presence are effectively active in the heathen world.[68]

General Revelation and Radical Displacement

Willis C. Lamott has concluded that "the goal of General Revelation is Special Revelation culminating in the self-disclosure of God in Christ."[69] Such an eventuality makes the displacement of other religions the goal of Christian missions. Dr. Lamott has observed that the issue is not live, because the prospects are that Christianity must face other religions for generations to come. In this interim, sharing and mutual inter-permeation are inevitable. This prospect is to be faced without fear, for the completeness of religion will "be discovered within the Christian revelation."[70]

The attitude toward non-Christian religions during this period will be sympathetic.[71] Dr. Lamott has proposed what may be considered an alternate method to the suggestion in Re-thinking Missions that Christian missionaries seek a fuller religious truth with leaders of other religions. He has proposed many meetings on several levels of Christians with people of other religions "to explore lines of common thinking concerning religious, social, political, or international affairs," in order that Christians may have helpful personal relations with non-Christians and learn their ways of thinking.[72]

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[68] Ibid., p. 148.

[69] Willis Church Lamott, Revolution in Missions: From Foreign Missions to the World Mission of the Church (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 150.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., p. 149.

General Revelation:
Evidence of the Unity of Mankind

Edward Jurji has seen in general revelation the evidence of the unity of mankind.[73] He has defined religion "as the response of man to the holy and righteous call of God to man."[74] General revelation, then, is the means by which God has called men and men have received the call "through the portals of reason, intuition, conscience, and faith."[75] The Gospel of what God has done through Jesus Christ rises above "even the noblest monuments of the religious phenomena of history."[76] However, the unity of mankind through the general revelation undergirding the non-Christian religions is itself a part of the Gospel proclamation.[77] Both general revelation and Christianity are meaningless apart from the Gospel, for Christianity must take "the Gospel as an everlasting guide."[78]

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[72] Ibid., p. 156.

[73] Edward Jurji, "The Science of Religion, A Christian Interpretation," Theology Today, VII (July, 1950), 196.

[74] Ibid., p. 199.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., p. 194.

General Revelation:
A Preparation for the Gospel

Included in the concept of general revelation is the idea that various religions have the possibility of serving as an "Old Testament" to Christianity. Through these religions God has made Himself sufficiently known to provide the "New Testament" of His grace an adequate basis for reception.

After pointing out that Christians ought to enjoy "friendly and sympathetic relations with earnest men everywhere who 'seek God,' and that in Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation,"[79] James H. Franklin quoted favorably from the address of Dr. William Axling in which he stated that his missionary experience had convinced him that the religions of the Japanese people had furnished "a sort of Old Testament out of which they can move forward and upward toward Him who came not to destroy but to fulfill."[80]

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[77] Ibid., p. 204.

[78] Ibid., p. 205.

[79] James H. Franklin, "The New Era in Missions," The Crozer Quarterly, XI (April, 1934), 145.

No religion, of course, can be an Old Testament to Christianity in any historically continuous sense, except the religion of the Old Testament. However, if God has made no preparation for the Gospel through making Himself known to men, there could be no basis for its proclamation. The idea that God has prepared the way for the reception of the Gospel by means of general revelation has been set forth by Joachim Wach. For him this revelation is real, and it has produced genuine religious experience. Therefore, revelation can be and is present in religions other than Christianity. Without general revelation, the Gospel would be proclaimed in a vacuum. The preparation for the Gospel in other religions has been seen by Dr. Wach in three forms: the sense of the mysterious or the attitude of worship; "the many expressions of the _Love of God_;" and a "moral element."[81] The Alexandrians and the theologians of the Medieval period were right, according to Dr. Wach, in providing for the concept of general revelation.[82]

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[80] _Ibid._, p. 147. Address was delivered by Dr. William Axling in November, 1932, before the Board of Managers, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

[81] Joachim Wach, "General Revelation and the Religions of the World," _The Journal of Bible and Religion,_ XXII (April, 1954), 88.

[82] _Ibid._, p. 89.

Edward Jurji has defined the area in which the concept of general revelation provides a preparation for the Gospel:

> Two propositions might be in order. First, that Christianity as it is communicated to men has two folds, the outer represented by the racial and cultural elements, necessary for direct transmission, and the inner which is sublime and of unuterably divine essence. Second, that God should have intended His truth, the inner fold, to be proclaimed through any other channel than that deriving its origin from the indigenous framework, is highly improbable.[83]

These propositions mean that it is imperative that the Christian faith "be communicated in forms . . . deriving their strength from the genius of native cultures."[84] Dr. Jurji specifically denied, however, that "the cultural heritage of Asia is like the Old Testament in its relation to Christianity and the Gospel."[85] Yet, these cultures and their religions are within the framework of general revelation "a preparation of the non-Christian soul for the Gospel."[86]

The Superiority of the Gospel

Hugh Vernon White has proceeded on the basis that religion can be justified by reasonable criteria, and therefore some religions are demonstrably better than others. For this reason, "it is a fallacy to say that one religion is as good as another,"[87] and "it is a fallacy to say that the religion any nation already has is, for that reason, the best religion for it."[88] Christianity has proved its superiority, first, in the truth in Jesus. Truth is personal, not abstract, and is to be found in the area of "moral and religious life."[89] The maximum in faith "is that the total reality of God is consistent with the essential character that we find in Jesus."[90] Christianity has also proved its superiority in its effect on civilization at three points:

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[83] Edward Jurji, The Christian Interpretation of Religion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 297.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid., p. 293.

[86] Ibid.

> (1) an ethical impulse which expresses itself not merely in zeal for personal morality, but also in developing forms of human service and a profound concern for human welfare; (2) a stimulus to education and the full development of intellectual and moral powers; and (3) the encouragement of social responsibility and cooperative effort for the general improvement of human life.[91]

The superiority of Christianity for Dr. White is centered in the superiority of Jesus Christ. He has expressed only profound admiration for other religions, and has recognized that each one has an emphasis peculiar to itself that contains genuine religious truth. His position has not been calculated to give the individual Christian a sense of superiority over people of other faiths, but has been predicated on the belief that the truth of God so far as human mind and heart can receive it is found in Jesus of Nazareth.

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[87] Hugh Vernon White, A Theology for Christian Missions (New York: Willet, Clark & Company, 1937), p. 111.

[88] Ibid., p. 112.

[89] Ibid., p. 117.

[90] Ibid., p. 120.

[91] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

A similar position has been taken by Edmund Davidson Soper, though he has not asserted the superiority of Christianity as vigorously as did Dr. White. For him, it must be recognized that there are false things in all religions, including Christianity, but "to say that false things exist in a religion is very different from saying that religion itself is false."[92] "Religion from the human side is the reaching out of the soul for what is highest and best,"[93] and is not false wherever it is found.[94] Christianity offers the greatest and truest objective reference in God revealed in Jesus Christ for these religious strivings of the human soul. In his discussion of the non-Christian religions, Dr. Soper has tended to point out the crude and grotesque rather than the higher inner meanings of the faith. This is true particularly in his discussion of Hinduism.[95]

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[92] Edmund Davidson Soper, ~~The~~ Philosophy of the Christian World Mission (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 153.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., p. 152.

The uniqueness of Christianity means for Dr. Soper, its superiority.

> Is not the real uniqueness of Christianity compromised if uniqueness is taken in the sense of being merely distinctive rather than superior, as it clearly is in Re-thinking Missions?[96]

Both Dr. White and Dr. Soper have made a place for the truth to be found in other religions through the category of general revelation, but, also through the category of particular revelation, they have asserted the superiority of Christianity insofar as it is true to the person of Jesus Christ.

Christianity, the Ultimate Faith

Nels F. S. Ferré has firmly stated that the "nature of Christianity constructively fulfills all other religions."[97] This means, of course, that Christianity is the ultimate faith for all men. In the pages following this statement, Dr. Ferré reviewed the types of approach that have been made the nature of Christianity in its relation to the other religions of the world.[98] This included a description of the relativism of the religious radicals, of the emphasis upon the uniqueness of Christianity by the conservatives who also have usually insisted on interpreting this uniqueness in terms of certain stated "fundamental" truths, and of the emphasis by the liberals on the reasonable nature of Christianity which enables it to be compared with other religions. There is an essential truth in each of these approaches which must be learned, according to Dr. Ferré, before a fresh approach to the relation of the ultimate faith with other religions can be made. The solution which he has offered has not been a formula, but the statement of antithetical principles: the principle of inclusion and exclusion.

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[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 165-178.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[97] Nels F. S. Ferré, *The Christian Faith, An Inquiry Into Its Adequacy as Man's Ultimate Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 38.

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-55.

It has to be assumed that syncretistic and ecclectic tendencies in religions become operative when they meet at any point where their adherents live in community. By the principle of inclusion,

> All things cultural, moral, and spiritual which are consistent with a God-centered, sacrificial, creative good will fully revealed and made effective in Jesus Christ may be freely admitted into the Christian religion.[99]

The radical position is vindicated by this principle of inclusion at the point of its emphasis on the historical nature of religions.

However, by the principle of exclusion,

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[99] Ibid., pp. 44-48.

> All that is inconsistent in profession and practice with the nature of Christianity as sacrificial, creative good will centered in God and first fully revealed and made effective as light and life in Jesus Christ must be done away.[100]

The conservative position is vindicated by this principle of exclusion at the point of its emphasis on "the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christianity as revealed through Jesus Christ."[101]

The liberal emphasis on the reasonable nature of Christianity not only affords a basis of comparison but also offers the means by which matters of belief, practice, or spirit are judged to be either consistent or inconsistent with the inner logic of the Christian faith.

In a later work, The Sun and the Umbrella, Dr. Ferré has implemented his views of the Christian attitude toward other religions. In this book, he examined several of the leading religions of the world to see the precise manner in which the Christian revelation might be considered the completion of some of their deeper insights into spiritual truth.[102] This discussion reveals a deep appreciation for truth to be found in non-Christian religions and a profound faith in the ultimate truth of Jesus Christ.

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[100] Ibid., p. 51.

[101] Ibid., p. 49.

[102] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Sun and the Umbrella (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 101-126.

The method of approach is described in these words: "Speaking the truth in love is a . . . prerequisite to an evangelism to non-Christian religions."[103] Dr. Ferré's appreciation for non-Christian religions is seen in these words: "As we move into the possible era of 'one world,' missionary activity may less and less become a one-way street."[104]

Christ, the Center of History

The term, general revelation, as it has been used in this discussion, is generally analogous to what Paul Tillich has called the period of preparation. "The revelation which occurs in the period of preparation is universal."[105] The term "universal" is differentiated from "general" in the sense that revelation does not occur "generally."[106] "'Universal,' as distinguished from 'general,' means (or can mean) a special event with an all-embracing claim."[107] This is not natural revelation, though revelation may occur through nature.[108] Christianity is not ultimate in itself, but bears witness to the ultimate which is Jesus as the Christ.[109] This final revelation "presupposed a revelatory history which was preparation for it and in which it was received."[110] Preparatory revelation cannot be identified as belonging to any particular religion, but it can be said that by this means divine truth came to man, and the foundation was laid for final revelation.

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[103] Ibid., p. 117.

[104] Ibid., p. 119.

[105] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 138.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., p. 139.

> Missions could not have reached any one if there had not been a preparation for the Christian message in universal religion. The question of the final revelation would not have been asked; therefore, could not have been received.[111]

By this analysis, Christianity cannot claim superiority as a religion over other religions. Religion cannot be final, except as it asserts "that Jesus of Nazareth is sacrificed to Jesus as the Christ."[112]

Though Dr. Tillich has not used the categories general and particular revelation, he has come to the same conclusion which these categories make possible. There is revelation available to all people of whatever land or religion, and there is a final or unique revelation in Jesus Christ by which all other revelation and all religions are judged and in some sense completed.

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[109] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

[110] *Ibid.*

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Particular Revelation Only

The extreme opposite from the radical liberal view that all religions are historically conditioned and have equal access to whatever revelation is available is found in the radical conservative view known as fundamentalism. This position has been ably represented by Harold Lindsell. For him, the only valid source of religious truth is found in the inerrant Bible. The process of arriving at an attitude toward non-Christian religions is exegetical. What does the Bible say and what may be logically deduced therefrom? These are the pertinent questions. Dr. Lindsell has followed this method. He has presented three propositions regarding the heathen:

> First, every non-Christian religion is inadequate and does not provide a real or sufficient revelation of God. Secondly, there are no real values in non-Christian religions . . . . Third, if a man is not in Christ he is not in God either. And lastly God does not reveal Himself through other means than those presently indicated in the word of God: i.e., through His Children's missionary activity to a lost world.[113]

This position makes "biblical intolerance" necessary. "To be tolerant means to let heathen slip down into hell and perish . . . . Tolerance for anything un-Christian or anti-

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[113] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 117.

Christian is treason."[114] For those of this school of thought, toleration in attitude toward other religions is a sign of weakness and an evidence of religious relativism. The tolerant attitude taken by the Jerusalem Conference is for Dr. Lindsell and others of like views an evidence of the abandonment of the central Christian faith in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.[115]

Dr. Lindsell has not taken into consideration what effect this intolerant attitude will have on those to whom the Gospel is preached. The responsibility of the Christian is to preach the Gospel, and the responsibility of the hearer is either to accept it or reject it. Undoubtedly, however, it would be unfair to say that he advocates the preaching of the Gospel without human concern and solicitude for those who hear it.

Summary of Attitudes

A wide range of attitudes toward non-Christian religions has been presented as being present in contemporary American theology. The indications are that more and more serious thought will be devoted to the problems inherent in the Christian attitude toward other religions.

As Edward Jurji has pointed out,

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[114] Ibid., p. 140.

[115] Ibid., p. 26.

> The issue is far more urgent, however, than that of keeping abreast with the events of our time and making necessary adjustments to contemporary movements abroad. Neither contempt for other peoples' religious pilgrimage nor passive acquiescence in the so-called inherent similarity of all faiths will really meet the crisis of the hour.[116]

The thinking that has been done has been constructive for the most part and has cleared much ground for future work on the problem. The following statements are formulations of attitudes that might fairly be made from positions described in this survey:

(1) Any religion is good for those born into it, but everyone has the responsibility for intelligent study of his religious convictions in the light of all other knowledge with the view of purifying and enriching his religious convictions and experience.

(2) There should be a universal religion, but no present religion is qualified to displace others. The duty of religious leaders is to reconceive their faith in terms of its essence and in the light of the reconception of other religions with the prospect of working toward universal faith.

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[116] Jurji, _op. cit._, p. 283.

(3) A pluralistic approach to religion is necessary for the kind of world in which we live.

(4) All religions have had available genuine revelation from God, but the final revelation has been made in Jesus Christ, and this revelation is the completion and the judge of all other revelations.

(5) There are reasonable criteria for determining the value of religions for mankind, and by these criteria Christianity is superior to all other religions.

(6) There is no true religion. There is only a true revelation by which all religions are judged.

(7) Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world and all who do not believe in him will go to hell.

In general, though there are variations from these conclusions, it may be said that American theology reflects an attitude of respect for the integrity of sincere people of all religions, an acknowledgement that there is truth from God in religion in all stages from Animism to the great ethical faiths, and that Jesus Christ is the ultimate religious symbol of whatever world faith the future may bring.

> We are returning to Christ, in whom our faith stands beyond the divisive creeds which one man's stuttering attempts in diverse dialects to rationalize God's miraculous splendor and potency. We shall someday come to a world theology. Of it Christ will still, of course, be

> the center. But in it the proclamation of his triumph and grace will not be combined and confined within the eccentric limitations of any local idiom.[117]

The Opportunity of Christianity

The idea of a United Religions of the World has often been advocated by laymen and trained religious leaders. There has been a failure, however, to find an adequate working basis for the pluralistic religious approaches of mankind. Sufficient unity for a common meeting place could not be had by desiring it or willing it. This problem has been approached by Edward Jurji whose Christian commitment and wide and appreciative knowledge of the religions of the world have peculiarly suited him for making a genuine contribution to a solution. A necessary basis for such an approach includes an analysis of the world situation with a conviction that there is a "plane of serenity and good will" on which religions can make their distinctive contribution to the needs of mankind.[118] Any syncretistic approach is to be avoided.[119] It must be recognized that evil ideologies can easily be embraced and supported by religions,[120] and that religions ought to draw on one another rather than "borrow . . . norms and ideals from the political and cultural spheres."[121]

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[117] Russell Henry Stafford, "The World Mission and the World Church," XXII (Spring, 1953), 168.

[118] Edward Jurji, "The Great Religions and International Affairs," Theology Today, XII (July, 1955), 169.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Will it be possible to maintain the integrity of Christian faith and enter into such an alliance with other religions? The answer is "yes," provided Christians learn with others "to live in a state of friendly yet fierce tension with other religions."[122] This is possible for the Christian when he learns "that to understand the New Testament faith and live by it is to accept as brothers even those who differ."[123]

The Christian opportunity lies in the area of taking the initiative in seeking ways and means whereby the great religions of the world may unite in their common concern for the welfare of mankind.

Will action in this direction blunt the edge of missionary thrust in the world? Dr. Jurji has answered, "On the contrary, it would constitute the only valid intercourse between the adherents of one faith and another."[124]

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[120] Ibid., p. 172.

[121] Ibid., p. 174.

[122] Ibid., p. 177.

[123] Ibid., p. 172.

[124] Ibid., p. 174.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS WITH CERTAIN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

An extension of the discussion of the Christian attitude toward non-Christian religions is the relation of Christian missions with specific religions. A discussion of this nature is to be found in several books dealing with a philosophy or theology of missions. The general nature of these discussions does not require that they be discussed in a study of the missionary content of theology, because, in general, they are primarily concerned to show the superiority of Christianity. There are, however, several articles that have appeared in scholarly religious journals which are pertinent to this study.

Christian Missions and Animism

There has never been serious question about the Christian mission to primitive people whose religion is generally classed as animism because their religion has not been considered significant for modern times, and because of the obvious cultural advantages to the people concerned. Consequently, the primary concern of Hugh Thompson Kerr, Jr., in discussing animistic religion was the Christian approach to the primitive mind. He based his remarks on addresses delivered by Dr. Eugene A. Nida at the Princeton Theological Seminary.[1]

> What is needed, therefore, is a planned approach which will re-interpret for the animist his own convictions in the light of the Christian faith. This may be done with constructive results if the missionary tries to relate Christian truths to the basic animistic tenets.[2]

A comment by Edward Jurji reveals the relationship between primitivism and the current missionary problem. He has pointed out that animism is a "testimony to the unity of mankind and the general revelation."[3] All living religions show historical continuity with some forms of animism either in their scriptures or in the culture of their adherents. Therefore, this remark by Dr. Jurji implements the evidence for general revelation in the religions of the world.

Christian Missions and Judaism

A more difficult problem for modern missions is the question of the evangelization of the Jews. F. Ernest Johnson wrote an article for The Ecumenical Review in which he intended to reflect the views of American religious leaders on the question of Jewish missions. The question did not involve whether individual Jews should be confronted with the gospel, but whether there is a basic difference in the Christian attitude toward a mission to the Jews and a mission to other religious groups.[4]

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[1] Hugh Thompson Kerr, Jr., "The Christian Answer to Animism," *Theology Today*, VII, No. 4 (January, 1951), 521.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Jurji, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

This question receives its point from the interpretation of Romans IX-XI. Fundamentalist groups, using this passage, tie the conversion of the Jews to Christian eschatology. However, the predominate American attitude, according to Dr. Johnson, is that this passage does not require that Jews be placed in a special category for theological reasons.

According to A. Ray Eckardt there are at least two Christian groups who oppose evangelizing the Jews. First, there are certain liberals who oppose "the missionary point of view" because they cannot regard "Christianity as successor to, or a higher religion than, Judaism."[5]

> The simple fact is that none of us represent in untainted fashion universal reason and truth and goodness. The extreme religious liberal recognized this when he presented his picture of the many pathways to the throne of God, with Jesus leading the way for Christians, Moses for Jews, Guatama for Buddhists, and so on . . . . The Christian may be convinced that the faith for which the church stands represents the final

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[4] F. Ernest Johnson, "The Jewish Question as an Ecumenical Problem," The Ecumenical Review, VII, No. 3 (April, 1955), 225.

[5] A. Roy Eckardt, "Christian Faith and the Jews," The Journal of Religion, XXX (October, 1950), 236.

> revelation of God, but I believe that at best this conviction can be said to be "true" only for him and for the Church. In other words, the fact of historical relativism requires that theology be confessional.[6]

The second group who oppose the missionary approach to the Jews are those who regard Judaism as the church outside the church. "Judaism must be preserved to meet idolatrous tendencies within Christianity."[7] This view has also been expressed by Paul Tillich, who regards Judaism as the "latent church" with the function of criticizing "those tendencies in Christianity which drive toward paganism and idolatry."[8]

Over against this view of the continuing function of Judaism in relation with Christianity is the view that the Old Testament stands as "a bulwark of the Church against paganism."[9] G. Ernest Wright has expressed the view that Israel, "even in the earliest preserved literature," radically differentiated between the order of nature (paganism) and the will of God (faith).[10]

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[6] Ibid., p. 239.

[7] Ibid., p. 237.

[8] Paul Johannes Tillich, "The Theology of Missions," Christianity and Crisis, XV, No. 5 (April 4, 1955), 38. (Reprinted from Missionary Research Library, Occasional Bulletin, Vol. V, No. 10.)

[9] G. Ernest Wright, "The Old Testament: A Bulwark of the Church Against Paganism," IRM, XL (July, 1949), 265-276.

[10] Ibid., p. 270.

> It is Israel which first radically broke with the pagan conception of the meaning of life and provided the view of history and the characteristic hope on which the New Testament and the Christian faith so firmly rest.[11]

The Old Testament is fulfilled in Judaism through the Talmud and in Christianity through Christ.[12] It is the Old Testament, the heritage of Judaism and Christianity, which must fulfill the mission of continuing judgment against any and all idolatrous tendencies in Christianity.

The problem of evangelizing the Jews has also been attacked from the point of view of anti-Semitism. Christian leaders are realizing more and more that the church has a responsibility to prevent the rise and spread of anti-Semitism, whatever its source. Frederick A. Acton has warned that failure to evangelize the Jews is a form of anti-Semitism.

> But if the Church stems the tide of anti-Semitism, is her duty done, or is there more? If that is all, the Church herself is guilty of discrimination against the Jews in its most tragic form . . . . To exclude the Jews from the scope of the Great Commission is peculiarly ironic, since to them we are indebted for the Scriptures, and from them comes the Redeemer.[13]

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Frederick A. Acton, "The Christian Church and the Modern Jew," *Theology Today*, IV (July, 1947), 233.

The necessity for a Christian mission to the Jews has also been stated by E. G. Homrighaussen. For him the imperative of evangelism demands it. To fail to evangelize the Jews would point up our failure to love them as neighbors. He is aware that Christianity in its hellenized form offers unnecessary stumbling blocks to Jewish people, and has insisted, therefore, that the Christian problem is to help the Jew see "the implicit Christian position in his religious heritage."[14]

The act of Christian love has also been set forth by Frederick Neumann as a basis for the Christian mission to the Jews. He has found in the Deuteronomic laws governing the Jewish attitude toward the stranger (Ger) the principle which should govern the Christian attitude toward the Jew who has himself once again become a stranger.[15] He has also set forth that both Jew and Gentile are equal in their need of God's forgiveness.

> The whole truth of the Jews is that they are placed in the shelter of the Divine forgiveness for which Jesus asked . . . .[16]

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[14] E. G. Homrighaussen, "Evangelism and the Jewish People," The International Review of Missions, XXXIX (July, 1950), 325.

[15] Frederick Neumann, "Christian Love and the Jews," The International Review of Missions, XLIV (July, 1955), 264-273.

[16] Ibid., p. 272.

The Christian, one who has received Divine forgiveness, has the imposed duty and the obligation of love to mediate the message of God's forgiveness to his Jewish neighbor.

Three positions have been set forth. First, the Christian liberal opinion stands against evangelizing the Jews as Jews, because the Christian claim for the supremacy of Christ can only be made on a "confessional" basis. The second position is taken from an interpretation of the purpose of God in history for the Jewish people. They are the expression of the continuing judgment of God against the idolatrous trends in Christianity. On the basis of the function of Judaism in relation to the ultimate purpose of God, Christians should not attempt to transform this "latent" church into the actual church of Jesus Christ. The third position set forth here expresses the requirement that Christian love and the imperative of Christian evangelism include Jews in the missionary outreach of the Church.

Christianity and Islam

Conflicting Theologies

A conflict of theologies of missions is apparent in two articles: one by Hugh Vernon White, a missionary board executive, and the other by John W. Bowman, a missionary to Indian Moslems.

Dr. White presented the thesis that Christians ought to cease their efforts to proselyte Moslems because they have never been successful at it,[17] because the theology of Christianity is abhorant to Moslems and is difficult for them to understand,[18] and because "the historic church has little that will ever appeal to the Moslem world.[19]

Mr. Bowman stated that past failure is no excuse for Christians to give up the mission upon which Christ has sent them.[20] He described the love of the Moslem for theology, and stated: "No Moslem of my acquaintance would be able to understand Dr. White's lack of interest in theology."[21] The real issue, according to Mr. Bowman, is that the content of Christian theology is repugnant to Moslems. The Moslem is repelled by the idea "that God out of infinite compassion graciously sent His Son to die for sinners."[22] It is the same stumbling block to them as it was to the Jews and the Greeks. "The final question is not what does the Moslem abominate, but where does the truth lie?"[23] Also, according to Mr. Bowman, the Moslem understands the necessity for the Church as fellowship, because he understands something of the significance of communal worship and brotherhood.[24]

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[17] Hugh Vernon White, "New Missionary Dimensions," Christendom, I (Summer, 1936), 620.

[18] Ibid., p. 621.

[19] Ibid.

[20] John W. Bowman, "The Validity and Necessity of Missions to Moslems," The Moslem World, XXVII (January, 1937), 1.

[21] Ibid., p. 4.

[22] Ibid.

The particular arguments, interesting as they are, are not as important as the theological perspectives represented. Dr. White represents the liberal position, which is well described in his own words:

> But the person of Christ and his teachings, and the works of men whose lives truly express his way to love service -- these constitute not alone the really important things in Christianity but also the universal language of the human spirit.[25]

Mr. Bowman represents the orthodox Protestant view which places emphasis upon what God has done for sinful man through Christ, and accepts the theological position necessary to explain God's redeeming act in the cross.

The Missionary Approach to Islam

The missionary approach to Islam has been called into question in the foregoing exchange of views. Should the approach be based upon what is common to the two religions?

According to Robert E. Speer, the basis of what is common "is in actuality a very little," and the approach should be on the basis of difference."[26] However, Dr. Speer has realized that the missionary approach must be based primarily upon love, because "it is love that is to conquer."[27]

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[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[25] White, *op. cit.*, p. 621.

A different approach has been suggested by Dr. Frank C. Laubach, who worked among the Moslems in the Phillipine Islands. He stated that " . . . we . . . are feeling our way to a sympathetic approach to the Moslems. We are starting with the common ground -- a very large area -- which we share with them . . . ."[28]

Samuel M. Zwemer has accepted the common identity of the God of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, he has insisted that the Moslems must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.[29] For him, the focal point of Christian truth centered in Jesus Christ. In commenting upon the fact that Re-thinking Missions proposed a "new valuation of the 'founders of religion,'" Dr. Zwemer said that

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[26] 26. Robert E. Speer, "The Missionary Conviction and Approach," The Moslem World, XXIX (April, 1939), 123.

[27] 27. Ibid., p. 124.

[28] 28. Frank C. Laubach, "Christianity and Islam in Lanao," The Moslem World, XXV (January, 1935), 49.

[29] 29. Samuel M. Zwemer, "The Allah of Islam and the God of Jesus Christ," Theology Today, III (April, 1946), 64-77, and "Calvinism and the Missionary Enterprise," Theology Today, VII (July, 1950), 206-216.

> True Christians and true Moslems know better. For them the question simply is the finality and sufficiency of Jesus Christ or the finality and sufficiency of Mohammed.[30]

Do the common areas covered in the two religions constitute areas of valid agreement? After defining areas which might serve as "points of contact," James Thayer Addison concluded: "We cannot pass over these doctrines as already agreed upon because in the very field which they cover Christianity has a wealth of contribution to make."[31]

Christian Missions and Burman Buddhism

There is a single article discussing the relation of Christianity with Burman Buddhism by H. J. Harwood. In it he has shown the approach to the Burman Buddhist at the point of the Christian doctrine of salvation. The attitude toward Buddhism implied by Dr. Harwood is one of appreciation for the moral strength of Buddhism in Burma based on "the idea of works under all-pervading law."[32]

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30. Samuel M. Zwemer, "The Finality of Jesus Christ," The Moslem World, XXIV (April, 1934), 110.

31. James Thayer Addison, "The Presentation of the Christian Message to the Muslims," The International Review of Missions, XXX (July, 1941), 321.

32. H. J. Harwood, "The Way of Salvation and the Burman Buddhist," The International Review of Missions, XXXVIII (October, 1949), 424.

Christian Missions and Hinduism

There are two articles concerning the relation between Christianity and Hinduism. In one, Charles S. Braden has given the attitude of Hinduism toward Christianity as reflected in materials published in English by Hindu writers. With characteristic Hindu tolerance there has been an attitude of appreciation of the Bible and of Jesus.[33] It might well be noted here that Hinduism could easily assimilate Jesus and the Gospels into its framework. The genius of the resulting religion, however, would remain Hindu.

In the second article, Nels F. S. Ferré has discussed the Hindu doctrine of Karma in the light of the Christian faith. Dr. Ferré has seen the possibility of a Christian contribution to the Hindu concept "when Indian pessimism is touched with Christian hope."[34] He has also seen the possibility that the doctrine of Karma can enrich Christian faith when the theory of Karma is seen "as the doctrine of deed and consequence within the larger order of God's grace."[35] The analysis presented by Dr. Ferré illustrates the type of interchange of insights resulting when Christian scholars study non-Christian religions appreciatively, envisioned by the Laymen's Report.

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[33] Charles S. Braden, "Hindu Interpretations of the Bible and Jesus," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XII (February, 1944), 42-47.

[34] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Christianity and Karma," The International Review of Missions, XXIX (April, 1940), 194.

[35] Ibid., p. 196.

In a third article, not dealing specifically with the problem, Floyd H. Ross made a passing, but very revealing comment about the value of Karma. His remarks were made in relation to the relative merits of a personal or impersonal concept of God in the light of the findings of psychotherapy. He said:

> From the standpoint of psychotherapy, the concept of the Law of Karma (a law of cause and effect relationships) may have more instrumental value than the concept of a personalized God.[36]

Conclusion

The two religions which have the most in common with Christianity, Judaism and Islam, have presented the most difficult problems for Christian missions. The areas of common agreement, whether large or small, are nullified when Jesus is presented to them as the Christ, the Son of the living God. These areas of agreement also cause some writers to consider these religions almost as Christian denominations.

This study of the missionary relation of Christianity with other religions has revealed a failure of American theologians to deal with the problems involved. Theological perspectives held by those who have made such studies, have, as might have been expected, influenced the approach made. However, a continuous study could easily change the perspectives of those pursuing it until a more nearly common standpoint would be achieved.

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[36] Floyd H. Ross, "The Christian Imperative," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XIX (January, 1951), 5.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

An ancient proverb asserts that all roads lead to Rome. Conversely, it must have been true that roads from Rome led everywhere. Motive is a terminal point in missionary theology. All elements of missionary theology seem to converge on the subject of motive in missions. Conversely, the subject of motive seems to be involved in every other element of missionary theology.

Christianity has been, and is, a missionary religion. This characteristic has prevailed to some significant degree throughout its history. There must be, therefore, some inner logic of the Christian faith that has consistently produced missionary activity.

The uniqueness of Christianity has been considered in Chapter IV under the title, "The Authority of the Faith." The quality of the Christian faith which makes it unique to the believer is that quality which best explains its inner logic which demands missionary expansion. The believer will begin at the point of that which he accepts as the ultimate authority of the Christian faith to explain his motive for Christian missions.

Milton G. Evans has identified four motives for Christian missions which are non-theological in essence, but which have theological significance. These motives include: (1) the will to live, (2) the filial motive, (3) the fraternal motive, and (4) loyalty. The first of these motives, the will to live, is inherent in any vigorous organism, biological or social.[1] The filial motive is operative in the Christian missionary enterprise when missionary activity is identified with the Father's will.[2] The family context for missionary motive is seen also in the demand of a spiritual brotherhood for enlargement.[3] The motive of loyalty "is to be felt rather than argued. It is 'the expulsive power of a new affection.'"[4]

Though there is a permanence in the missionary movement which has reached across the span of the centuries and which has penetrated a great variety of theological systems, there is a direct relation between theology and missionary motive. The motive for missions must be conceived in relation to one's understanding of the nature and person of Jesus Christ, to the meaning of salvation and, in fact, to every phase of theological explanation.

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[1] Milton G. Evans, "Why Christian Missions Today and Tomorrow?" The Crozer Quarterly, XI (January, 1934), 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

The Meaning of Salvation

The Fate of the Heathen

From a negative point of view, missionary motive has been centered in the belief that all persons who die without faith in Jesus Christ go to eternal punishment in hell. Roy L. Smith and others have spoken as if this motive had only historical significance explaining the motives of the first generation of American Protestant missionaries.[5] The issue is not dead. In a book published in 1943, Edmund Davison Soper found it necessary to refute the doctrine that adherents of non-Christian religions are all going to hell.[6] In a book published in 1949, Harold Lindsell gave vigorous support to the belief that all non-Christians are lost.[7]

The missionary who believes that men are going to hell if they do not reach them with the gospel is motivated by a humanitarian impulse. He feels that he must "pluck brands from the burning." Those who now accept this negative doctrine of salvation are in the minority, but many who have rejected the doctrine have failed to work out a satisfactory doctrine of salvation that will provide a motive for missionary activity. They ask, if the "heathen" are to be saved (go to heaven), would it not be better to leave them alone and not place them in jeopardy by confronting them with a decision for or against Christ. At least a partial answer has been given to this question by Dr. Soper, who quoted Bishop Randolph S. Foster: "I present the gospel to the man in the non-Christian world for the same reason that I present it to my son -- because he needs it."[8]

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[5] Roy L. Smith, The Revolution in Christian Missions (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), pp. 18-20.

[6] Edmund Davison Soper, The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 141-142.

[7] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy in Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 77.

A New Concept of Salvation

The real answer to the problem, however, is to be found in a more adequate -- and it might be added, a more Biblical concept of salvation. Beginning with the rise of liberalism in American theology, a more positive view of salvation has been defined. James Thayer Addison has observed this trend.

> The crying need which they /the missionaries/ move to meet is not so much the need to save the lost from hell as to answer the unspoken desire for something deeper and more satisfying -- for all that Christ can give in abundance.[9]

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[8] Soper, op. cit., p. 143.

[9] James Thayer Addison, "The Changing Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions," The International Review of Missions, XXVII (January, 1933), 116.

Roy L. Smith has described the tremendous influence of Walter Rauschenbusch on "the revolution in American Church life and thought."[10] The application of the gospel to the social situation and the designation of social evils as sin created a new theological atmosphere in America, and, as a result, a new dimension was added to the concept of salvation. A new emphasis on the value of the Christian life for the here and now characterized much preaching and writing.

The Power of the Changed Life

The new emphasis was based on a "return to the historical Jesus." The theology of Paul was either ignored or discredited by many who found a new significance in the human life and ministry of Jesus. Not only did Jesus challenge men to do something about social evils, he also set the example for the victorious life that men might live by following his example. Dr. Smith said of Jesus: "He challenged the Church to take the world captive with a new ideal of life."[11] He set forth the power of the new life in a dramatic description of Jesus on the cross. When Jesus saw four of his followers at the cross, he "cried out, '_It is finished._'"[12] Jesus had faith that "once his idea of the Kingdom was planted in four lives, it would never thereafter perish."[13] The missionary motive is grounded in the faith that in Jesus Christ the world has the only gospel adequate for its needs.[14]

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[10] Roy L. Smith, _op. cit._, pp. 33-38.

[11] _Ibid._, p. 166.

[12] _Ibid._, p. 167.

E. Stanley Jones has also found the missionary motive in the power of a changed life. He said, "As long as Jesus Christ can produce the fact of conversion He will be indispensible to human life and to proclaim Him a human necessity."[15] He did not appeal to a particular text for authority for the missionary motive, "but on the very texture of the Gospel as a whole."[16]

The Missionary Motive
and the Proclamation of the Gospel

An example of how motive for missions is related to the larger areas of theological concern is to be seen in the work of Nels F. S. Ferré. In his analysis, there is no essential difference between missionary activity and the proclamation of the Gospel. "Missions are for pagans. Pagans are everywhere."[17] The same motives which compel one to accept the Christian faith are the motives for missions. Motivation to accept the Christian faith is on three levels: fear, duty, and love.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 157.

[15] E. Stanley Jones, "The Motives of Missions," Ch. IX, The Christian Message for the World Today: A Joint Statement of the World-Wide Mission of the Christian Church (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1934), p. 193.

[16] Ibid., p. 197.

Fear is the level at which God becomes real to many people, and this fear is inspired by God Himself and by the possibility of Hell. "Hell is ever the destiny of unrepentant souls."[18] Fear cannot, therefore, be discarded as a motive for the Christian life, because it offers the alternative of faith and makes freedom real.[19] Freedom requires alternatives. Love stands at the opposite extreme from fear and casts it out. Destruction of fear is dangerous, except as it is supplanted by love. "Fear must face Hell and shudder; love must face heaven and long for God's complete victory."[20] The final victory belongs to love, because "Heaven hovers over Hell to empty it."[21]

Duty is the middle ground, or the bridge "from fear to love."[22] Duty lifts self to that which is "beyond the self and to which that self belongs, and which he cannot master."[23] Duty, then, like the Law, is the tutor to Christ. Love is the highest motive for life and conduct, for God is love, and He created at the level of love. The Christian must accept responsibility on whatever level he has attained and he must analyze his true situation.[24] He must keep in mind that beyond the level of creation at which one finds "evil, need, and fear"[25] there is the level of redemption.

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[17] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Fear, Duty and Love as Ultimate Motives for Christian Missions," XXXVII (October, 1948), 393.

[18] Ibid., p. 394.

[19] Ibid., p. 395.

[20] Ibid., p. 401.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 399.

> Thus only can the love of God meet through the missionary both the level of creation groaning to be redeemed and the level of redemption with the joy and peace of believing.[26]

Eschatology and the Missionary Motive

Eschatology has been more in the forefront of the American theological scene as a result of the Assembly of the World Council of Christian Churches in Evanston, Illinois, in 1955.[27] According to Robert L. Calhoun, "Eschatology is the doctrine concerned with the limits or boundaries of our living, in time and existence, toward which at every moment our whole lives tend."[28] Missionary motive is inevitably molded by the end toward which Christian living is believed to move.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] The theme of the Assembly was "Christ, the Hope of the World."

Final Universal Salvation

An article by Dr. Ferré which appeared in Theology Today gives the eschatological framework for his motives for missions.[29] "Faith's assertion that the sovereign Lord is saving love,"[30] is the theme. Each of the three problems which he says confront an adequate eschatology are pertinent to his statement of missionary motives. They are:

> (1) The relation between the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man, (2) the relation between love and fear as motives of salvation, and (3) a final destiny of man that shall be consistent with God's love and holiness, on the one hand, and man's freedom on the other.[31]

The sovereignty of God has to be understood in terms of God's love, which is not an attribute, but a definition of His nature. He has empirically conditioned both man and history by His creative activity and thereby points to redemption. Because man is finite, "no human fact or act is infinite without the chance for being remade."[32] Sin is the failure of children to accept the Father's will,[33] which man is free to do. Though man has, in fact, misused his freedom and will continue to do so, the Father has no "permanent problem children."[34]

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[28] Robert L. Calhoun, "Christ -- the Hope of the World," The Ecumenical Review, VII (January, 1955), 141.

[29] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Present Possibility and Future Hope," Theology Today, VIII (January, 1952), 485-497.

[30] Ibid., p. 483.

[31] Ibid., p. 485.

The fact of man's sin makes necessary the act of God's redemption. On man's part, both fear and love are elicited in his response to God, and these responses accord with the severity and the goodness of God. The severity of God is His warning that He will not receive man in his disobedience. "The bridge between fear and love is duty,"[35] which conditions man to accept God's will in love.

Man's final destiny cannot be inconsistent with God's love and His redemptive purpose. There are, according to Dr. Ferré, three strands of eschatology in the New Testament: (1) eternal hell for the finally disobedient, (2) annihilation, that is, the wicked shall perish, and (3) all finally shall be saved.[36] The latter view has been accepted by Dr. Ferré as being consistent with God as love. Final salvation takes place beyond history, and does not preclude Hell as the temporary abode for the wicked.

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 487.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 488.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 486.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 491.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 494-496.

This eschatological position is essential to Dr. Ferré's whole theological system. The end toward which God works is the redemption of His children, and His purpose will ultimately be accomplished. The justice and love of God are vindicated. The emphasis has been changed from men's lostness to his potential salvation. Therefore, the Christian motive for missions can be expressed in Christ's words: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."[37]

The Second Coming

History is moving to a climax which will be reached when Christ comes again, according to Harold Lindsell. Pre-millennialists differ among themselves concerning the schedule of events clustered around the second coming, but this event is central to their understanding of God's purpose in human history. The second coming of Christ vindicates God's sovereignty over history. Dr. Lindsell has said that all pre-millennialists "must agree that the Great Commission will be finished before the Church is raptured."[38] The Great Commission is the task of the Church; therefore, the diligence of Christians in fulfilling the Great Commission constitutes man's part in the timetable of God. The missionary who goes to a foreign field is motivated by the awareness that his labors help to "bring history to a climax and to an end."[39]

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[37] John 10:10.

[38] Lindsell, op. cit., pp. 193-194.

The Kingdom of God

Liberal Christians have not been particularly interested in the second advent, and especially have they not been interested in its interpretation by Pre-millennialists. Rather, the liberal emphasis has been placed upon the concept of the Kingdom of God as a present and unfolding reality. According to A. Stewart Woodburne, the contemporary concept of the Kingdom of God combines the value of both individual and social salvation.[40] Evidence of concern for social salvation is found in the missionary enterprise "with its thousands of educational, industrial, agricultural, and medical institutions."[41] He has also cited the fight of the missionaries against "such social evils as child marriage, the degredation of widows, footbinding, the economic exploitation of children, untouchability, and forced illiteracy."[42]

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[39] Ibid., p. 192.

[40] A Stewart Woodburne, "Salvation Must Be Plural," The Journal of Religion, XIV (October, 1934), p. 448.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 449.

Dr. Woodburne's insistence upon "plural salvation" emphasizes the faith that a Christian world will be a better world. This is an illustration of the relevance of the Christian faith to the world and its needs. The hope for a better world provides a motive for missionary activity. As Dr. Woodburne has said: "Any man who joins in the prayer 'Deliver us from evil,' will leave no stone unturned to help answer his prayer in respect to social ills from which his people suffer."[43]

Toward an Ecumenical Theology

The differences between the advocates of the second advent and the advocates of the Kingdom of God as a present and unfolding reality have appeared unresolvable. Walter Marshall Horton has shown how their differences are beginning to yield to the common approach to the problems involved provided by the World Council of Churches.[44] In general, the American theologians have represented a view opposed to the second advent, at least in major progress, and a recent development in New Testament criticism have combined to direct American thought into a more serious consideration of eschatology -- realized and unrealized.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Walter Marshall Horton, Christian Theology, An Ecumenical Approach (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 263-269.

Professor Horton cited the conclusion of John Ballie in his book on The Belief in Progress:

> . . . that the one clear hope of progress to which Christians can confidently cling in our difficult age is the hope of missionary progress. This must not be understood either as promising continuous missionary advance, or as limiting progression to individual converts.[45]

The social dimension of missions, by which "a truly living church" can "remold its whole cultural environment" gives rise to the hope that this "time of testing" may lead . . . to a new and more extensive influence of Christianity upon world civilization.[46]

Motive Centered in Jesus Christ

Every person who has felt the impact of Jesus Christ in his life has felt some form of missionary impulse imposed by that experience. As John A. Mackay has observed, "The deeper one's sense of personal devotion to him, the truer is one's sense of missionary obligation.[47] Edmund D. Soper has said that "the classic statement of the Apostle Paul is a fitting summary of all that can be said of the basic missionary motive:

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45. Ibid., pp. 273-274.

46. Ibid., p. 274.

47. John A. Mackay, "Theology, Christ, and the Missionary Obligation," Theology Today, VII (January, 1941).

> For the love of Christ constraineth us . . . . But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . . . We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.[48]

The redemptive love of Christ has been seen by Dr. Mackay as the missionary imperative required by the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Redemptive love is called agape in the New Testament, and is marked by passionate and tender concern for the needs, physical as well as spiritual, of other people.[49] Dr. Mackay has seen this redemptive love as the universal need of mankind. The Christian religion is the only religion that "has magnified or practiced this love, and the Christian Church has practiced it too little."[50]

Dr. Mackay has felt that the missionary motive must be centered in Jesus Christ. He wrote, "The missionary obligation cannot be fully grasped until we ask and answer the question, Who is Jesus Christ?"[51] In his answer to his own question, Dr. Mackay indicated his acceptance of the historical faith in Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, and as the Lord and Saviour of mankind.[52] He said that any effort to make Jesus Christ a "single contribution to ultimate religious truth,"[53] would cause Christians "to lose any compelling sense of missionary obligation."[54] The missionary motive is centered in the faith that "Jesus Christ is predestined in the purpose of God to be the Lord of every human mind and heart."[55]

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[48] Edmund D. Soper, op. cit., p. 148. (II Cor. 5: 14, 18, 20.)

[49] John A. Mackay, "The Missionary Legacy to the Church Universal," The International Review of Missions, XXXVII (July, 1948), p. 373.

[50] Ibid, cf. Mahayana Buddhism.

[51] John A. Mackay, "Theology, Christ, and the Missionary Obligation," Theology Today, VII (January, 1941), 431.

The same faith in the finality of Christ as the motive of Christian missions has also been expressed by Milton G. Evans who identified "the worth of the Christian message with the worth of Christ," and its permanence with his permanence.[56] "The Christian's possession of Jesus is the why of Christian missions today and tomorrow."[57]

An insistence that missionary theology must be "centered upon the reconciling action of the triune God" has been made by Paul L. Lehmann.[58] The relevance of the doctrine of the trinity for the declaration of the whole faith set forth by H. R. Niebuhr[59] inspired by Dr. Lehmann's thought. Jesus Christ is at the center of man's understanding of God, and faith in him should be "the point of departure" for missions.[60]

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 432.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 433.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[58] Paul L. Lehmann, "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," *Theology Today*, IX (April, 1952), 22.

No fundamentalist ever took the word of the Bible more literally than Roy L. Smith has taken the word of Christ. "For every true Christian the word of Christ must be final."[61]

> There was a certain literalness about that early church which is one of the most inspiring facts in all its record. When Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," those first century Christians took him at his word and went . . . .[62]

John A. Mackay has maintained the need for a Christ-centered motivation for Christian missions. He has said, ". . . the deeper one's personal devotion to Him, the truer is one's sense of missionary obligation."[63]

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[59] H. R. Niebuhr, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," Theology Today, III (October, 1946), 371-384.

[60] Lehmann, op. cit., p. 21.

[61] Roy L. Smith, op. cit., p. 158.

[62] Ibid., p. 164.

[63] John A. Mackay, "The Great Commission and the Church Today," (Chapter X), Missions Under the Cross, Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements Issued by the Meeting, ed. Norman Goodall (London: Edinburg House Press, published for the International Missionary Council, 1953), p. 134.

The motive to share Christ is practically universal in missionary testimony. E. Stanley Jones was speaking for missionaries when he said, "We would share Him because He is the best we have."[64] Whatever other motives have been involved in missionary activity, this motive to share the richness of Christ has not been absent and has often been central.

Paul S. Minear has found that the new covenant requires the fulfillment of the Great Commission by the Church. Biblical writers customarily viewed relationships with God in terms of covenants. Jesus was the bringer of a new covenant, and "the new covenant in Jesus' blood serves as the necessary basis of the Great Commission."[65] Just as God's covenants with Israel had imposed a mission upon the nation, so now the new covenant through Christ has imposed a mission upon his followers. "The exaltation of Jesus is commission. The commission is exaltation."[66]

Missionary Motive and the Need of Men

The humanitarian motive is rarely ever absent from the mind of the missionary. As has been observed, even the missionary who believes non-Christians are all going to Hell is motivated by a humanitarian impulse. A theological formulation to the humanitarian motive has been given by Hugh Vernon White. His basic presupposition is that religion is made for man; not man for religion. Therefore, all religious institutions and activities must be directed to the service of man. He said:

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[64] E. Stanley Jones, "The Motives of Missions," (Ch. IX), The Christian Missionary Message for the World Today, p. 199.

[65] Paul S. Minear, "The Covenant and the Great Commission," (Ch. IV), Missions Under the Cross, p. 75.

[66] Ibid.

> The true conception, then, of the missionary's work is not that of someone forcing his religious belief upon others by any means but that of a Christian who feels the human and spiritual need of men and who devotes his life to answering that need as best he can.[67]

Dr. White has conceived Christian motivation as an ellipse, with one center being the love of God, and the other being the love of man.[68] Love for God is expressed in worship -- "that unqualified self-surrender that can be given only to the Supreme Goodness and Beauty."[69] Love for man "is the sympathy and good will that prompt to a service that man needs and we can render."[70] Christian missions are man-centered, just as is the love of God.[71] This means that the aims of Christian missions are centered in man, and seek "to bring man the life and quality of life that are Christian."[72] God has given Christ to man. All Christian institutions are for man. Men who have received these blessings must carry them to others.

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[67] Hugh Vernon White, One Gospel for Mankind (New York: Friendship Press, 1939), p. 70.

[68] Hugh Vernon White, A Theology of Christian Missions (New York: Willet, Clark & Company, 1937), p. 91.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., p. 93.

Secondary Motives

Humanitarian

The humanitarian motive described by Dr. White was religious. The end sought for man was that he should be like Christ. However, there are secondary humanitarian motives centered in service for man that are designed primarily to minister to his physical needs. Humanitarian service has always been important to the missionary enterprise. These services grew naturally out of felt needs by missionaries on the fields. They have been the cause of much discussion. Some who have been primarily interested in evangelism have felt that too much money and manpower have gone into these areas of mission work. Some have felt that these services have been used wrongly as means of proselyting those who received them. The veteran missionary E. Stanley Jones has said:

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[72] Ibid., p. 149.

> . . . We should give education and healing freely and frankly with no strings tied to it, but along with it we should just as freely and just as frankly let it be known what are the sources of the inspiration and life behind all our doing.[73]

Edmund D. Soper has identified the humanitarian services on the mission field with the example of Jesus, "who went about doing good and healing those who were brought to him. The call of need has seemed to be the call of Christ to meet that need, whatever it was."[74]

From a theological point of view, humanitarian motives must always be secondary. They should contribute to the motive, centered in Christ, which seeks the enlargement of the Kingdom of God. The central motive could not be adequate, however, if it did not include a ministry to all human needs with Christian compassion.

The Crusader Complex

The missionary who is motivated by the love of conquest and who feels personally superior because he has the Christian religion is afflicted with what has been called the "crusader complex."[75] This kind of motive results when one comes to feel that he is doing what is only the prerogative of God: saving men.

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[73] E. Stanley Jones, "The Motives of Missions," (Chapter IX), The Christian Message for the World Today, p. 195.

[74] Soper, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Missions, Culture, and Nationalism

A penetrating differentiation between primary and secondary motives in missions has been made by Robert B. Bratcher. He has said that "we are not called to make disciples of all nations in order to save Western civilization or preserve the 'American way of life.'"[76] The real basis for "the world mission of the church" is "the all-encompassing authority of the risen Lord," and "the nature of the Lord of the Church."[77]

Nationalism in religion often takes a peculiar twist. The feeling of national superiority is often reflected in religion. In America this sense of superiority has by a peculiar twist been used as a club against missions. D. A. McGavran has written an illuminating analysis of this situation.[78] He has pointed out that the attack on weaknesses in the practice of Christianity in America has been turned into an attack on missions. It usually takes this form: what right have we to send missionaries to convert other people to Christianity when in America we still have war, race prejudice, and rampant immorality. Let us make America Christian, these people say, and then we can invite the rest of the world to Christ. This is a peculiarly arrogant appeal based on the assumption that America must become sinless, like Christ, before the rest of the world can expect the blessings of salvation.[79] This is "rationalized selfishness."[80] Without in any way lessening the urgency of the appeal for a Christian, Dr. McGavran pointed out the fact most pertinent to the issue. "The Redeemer is not Christian America. The Redeemer is Christ hanging on a cross. The basic motive for Christian missions is religious, and the appeal to support the enterprise with life or money must be denationalized. It must be remembered that nationalism has many subtle expressions.

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[76] Robert B. Bratcher, "The World Mission of the Church," Review and Expositor, LII (July, 1955), 370.

[77] Ibid.

[78] D. A. McGavran, "Christ, Christian America, and the World," The International Review of Missions, XXV (January, 1935), 116-129.

The insistence that the motive must be denationalized does not mean that the motive must also be dehumanized. The human equation will be pertinent to missionary motive so long as the second commandment is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." As Dr. Evans has pointed out, "Christian missions, then, today as always, recognizes all human ills, from thirst and hunger for drink and food to hunger and thirst for righteousness."[81]

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[79] Ibid., p. 117.

[80] Ibid., p. 116.

[81] Evans, op. cit., p. 14.

The transmission of culture through the agency of missions has not been a complete failure. Rather, it has often been an expression of Christian compassion finding expression in the mercy of medical missions, the enlightenment of educational missions, and in the higher standard of living made possible by agricultural and vocational missions. Christian ideals have through these means permeated legal and social structures in many mission lands bringing a new richness of life based on the dignity and work of the individual. These blessings should not be identified with Western culture with the implication of the Western over the Eastern culture. Many of these blessings are in reality the gift of Christianity to the East. It is Christ, not the West, whom missionaries carry with them.

John K. Shyrock has written an analysis of the relation of culture to missions in which he has called attention to the folly of transmuting culture with religion.[82] He has, however, recognized that there are some elements of culture which are necessary to the preservation of the faith,[83] but

> . . . there is no necessary and inescapable connection between religion and culture, for religion is concerned with the will: hence there may be good men at any level of culture.[84]

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[82] John K. Shyrock, "A Critique of Modern Missions," The Crozer Quarterly, XXVI (April, 1949), 132-142.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

The primary concern of Christian missions in this connection is that Christianity should not be identified with any nationality or culture, either in motive for propagating the Gospel or in method of work.[85]

Missionary Motive and War

Another phase of missionary motive received expression as a result of World War II. Basil Matthews saw the war as a judgment calling for a greater sense of mission among Christians. He stated that Christian aims include freedom and justice for all kinds and conditions of men in a "creative fellowship."[86] He saw the missionary movement as an instrument for bringing into being the universal Church.[87] By this means, he said

> Christian missions create a new world, providing communities in each country, who, in increasing cooperation in thought, prayer, planning and action, will become the living nucleus of world community after the war -- nations and races really reconciled in the Christian family.[88]

Toward the end of the war, Stacy R. Warburton expressed a similar hope. Seeing the need for a world fellowship in

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[85] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[86] Basil Matthews, "Should Missions Go On?" *Religion in Life*, XI (Summer, 1942), 413.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 417.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 416.

Christ which would obligate men to each other with a bond of loyalty "above and beyond the claims of national allegiance and loyalty."[89] What this war, he wrote,

> should teach us above everything else, is the overwhelming demand for insistent, burning, compelling evangelism, like that of the early Romans and Persians, like the Irish of the eighth century, like the Franciscans of the thirteenth century, or the Moravians of the eighteenth, or the pioneer missionaries of the nineteenth, to bring the full love of Christ and loyalty to him unto millions of hearts and lives all over the world. It is that which must be our dominant purpose in the days ahead.[90]

These two articles express the missionary motive in terms of the Christian hope for a new and better world. The dark days of war which are filled with evidences of the breakdown of Christian ideals force upon every mind sensitive to the real needs of the world a sense of guilt for past failure to sacrifice for the effective presentation of the Gospel to the world. One becomes aware that if he and his fellow Christians had done more, these tragedies might have been avoided. The years ahead must be different, and the possibilities of the future provide the motive for service. Christian missions have provided the means of international fellowship and brotherhood -- things which war destroys first.

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[89] Stacy R. Warburton, "Highways of the New World," The Crozer Quarterly, XXI (October, 1945), 333.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 337.

The missionary aim of mankind united in Christ shines like a bright light in a dark night in time of war. It is easy to be more concerned with the fruit of peace than with the conditions of peace, and missionary motive in wartime is tempted to be concerned with secondary goals rather than with primary requirements.

In "A Re-Appraisal of the Missionary Vocation," Theodore Romig, writing several years after World War II, expressed the same desire for world community.[91] The event which precipitated his "re-appraisal" was the overrunning of China by the communists. This event, in his view, called into question cultural penetration as an accompaniment or method of Christian missions. The missionary approach, he said, must be the "principle of meeting."[92] He cited the question of Professor Hocking to the veteran missionary, C. F. Andrews, "How do you preach the Gospel to a Hindu?" The reply was, "I don't. I preach the Gospel to a man."[93] At this personal level differences of race, nationality, and religion become impertinent. The motive is to preach the Gospel to a man. The "principle of meeting" also creates

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[91] 91. Theodore Romig, "A Re-Appraisal of the Missionary Vocation," Theology Today, IX (April, 1952), 65.

[92] 92. Ibid., p. 61.

[93] 93. Ibid., p. 60.

"community" when believers meet. In community, "faith is renewed and our joy is made known."[94]

> The achievement of this world community depends, however, on whether the missionary movement will abandon the approach of cultural penetration and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives and acts through the meeting of persons.[95]

The Imperative of Fellowship

Ralph E. Diffendorfer has distinguished between the motive based on divine command and the motive based on the imperative of fellowship. These two motives are expressed in two hymns often sung at missionary programs.

> The Son of God goes forth to war
> A Kingly crown to gain.

and

> In deeds of love and mercy,
> The heavenly Kingdom comes.[96]

> And so, through the intervening years, we find two points of view, the one of command, the imposition of doctrine, catechetical instruction and public preaching -- the other of fellowship, service, meeting human needs, deeds of love and mercy, and the free movement of dynamic and Christlike personalities.[97]

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] Ralph E. Diffendorfer, "Missions and Nationalism," *Religion in Life*, XI (Winter, 1941), 55.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Conclusion

As Rufus M. Jones has said, "Christianity is essentially apostolic, that is, missionary."[98] This study has revealed a concern that the apostolic nature of Christianity should stand undefiled by motives to further national and cultural aims. The conflict of theological approaches has been clearly evident, especially between liberal and fundamentalist views. As Christians move closer together through the influence of the growing ecumenical movement, the motivation to win the world for Christ should be based on a more unified concept of the Gospel and its requirements for men.

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[98] Rufus M. Jones, "The Background and Objectives of Foreign Missions," The Crozer Quarterly, X (April, 1933), 130.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIANITY, THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The relation of Christian missions to the universality of Christianity has been stated by Gordon Poteat:

> Christianity cannot be maintained in any particular spot except on the basis of its universal applicability. If it is not ultimately applicable everywhere, it will be ultimately applicable nowhere.[1]

Christianity is a universal type religion, because it has a doctrine of one righteous God who is concerned for men, and a doctrine of the unity of the human race by creation, and because it has consistently manifested a concern to include all men in its fellowship.

Christianity inherited two essential qualities of universalism from the Old Testament: ethical monotheism and the unity of mankind by creation. Edmund D. Soper has traced the development of ethical monotheism in the Old Testament, and found that it issued in "prophetic universalism."[2] By prophetic universalism he means that in the concept of the great prophets, God included the people of the whole world in His saving purpose. J. Philip Hyatt has said, ". . . the God of the Old Testament is a universal deity. This is true of the best of the Old Testament."[3] He has further pointed out the need of theology to advance in this direction in order to "facilitate advance in world unity."[4] In writing on "Jewish Universalism," Bernard J. Bamberger has made the same assertion of the universal nature of God in the Torah, and has added that the same authority has taught the concomitant doctrine of the universal nature of man created in the image of God, and "a universal law binding on all men."[5] Jewish particularism provides the doctrine of the "mission of Israel (Cf. Isaiah 42:7)."[6] It must be pointed out, however, that in the Old Testament these principles resulted only in an implicit universalism. The implicit universalism of the Old Testament became explicit in Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

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[1] Gordon Poteat, "Have Christian Missions in the Far East Failed?" The Crozer Quarterly, XV (January, 1938), 26.

[2] Edmund Davison Soper, The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 21-30.

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[3] J. Philip Hyatt, "The Old Testament Ideas of God," Religion in Life, XI (Summer, 1942), 354. Cf. Herbert Gordon May, "Theological Universalism in the Old Testament," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XVI (April, 1948), 100-107.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Bernard J. Bamberger, "Jewish Universalism," Religion in Life, XX (Summer, 1951), 363.

[6] Ibid., p. 366.

A Universal Ethic

From the perspective of missionary theology, the possibility of a universal ethic is equally as important as a monotheistic conception of God, and should be a corollary doctrine. A universal ethic would have to be possible before Christianity in anything like its present form could become the universal religion of mankind.

Is a universal ethic possible? Do the differences in moral codes point to an ultimate relativism which would make a universal ethical religion impossible? There is a "factual level" of universal ethics, according to Elmo A. Robinson, which

> refers both to the agreement concerning fundamental morals which underlies the diversity of details in morals, and to the agreement concerning fundamental ethical principles as stated by the great ethical teachers.[7]

Paul Tillich has made an analysis of the idea of conscience, which had its rise in Greek and Roman philosophy. Regarding conscience in the New Testament, he has pointed out that

> in principle Christianity has always maintained the unconditional moral responsibility in the Pauline doctrine of the conscience.[8]

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[7] Elmo A. Robinson, "Unrestricted Universalism," The Crozer Quarterly, XXIX (April, 1952), 169.

[8] Paul Tillich, "Conscience in Western Thought and the Idea of a Transmoral Conscience," The Crozer Quarterly, XXII (October, 1945), 292.

In the thought of Nels F. S. Ferré, the image of God "has no specific content."[9] However, "the empirical content of the image of God is man's conscience."[10] Further, the conscience has no content but is rather filled "by social training, by individual experience, and by his reasoning on both of these."[11] Man is saved from identification with his social environment and from social determinism, because "he possesses a conscience."[12] "Conscience is the self's inner standard, in relation to others and conditioned by others both in development and in reference to his own ideal conduct."[13]

In these concepts may be seen the reason for individual differences in moral action and the potential for uniformity in ethical standards. Here are the differences between the actual and the ideal. His thought, however, has more specific implication for the missionary goal of Christianity -- that it shall become the universal religion of mankind -- when he discusses the good and the right.

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[9] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Man's Answer to God's Work in History," The Crozer Quarterly, XXI (1944), 100.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 101.

[12] Nels F. S. Ferré, "A Theological Doctrine of Man," Religion in Life, XI (Autumn, 1942), 578.

[13] Ibid., pp. 578-579.

> There is an objective necessity, moreover, why Christian ethics is final for man: in Christianity alone the good and the right are reconciled. The Good we define as dispositional; the right as social.[14]
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> . . . .
>
> . . . The good according to Christianity is the kind of love that is unreservedly interested in others. Christian love is self-giving, creative of fellowship.[15]

The good demands the right, and each complements the other. In the past, the good was provided for in the providence of God by "prophets and seers in many lands."[16] Christ, however, is "the good in matchless fullness. The good which alone can realize the right."[17]

In the foregoing analysis, good in other religions is recognized, but each religion must fall short of ultimate ethics for mankind, because nowhere, except in Christianity, has the good been so completely revealed as in Jesus Christ. From the perspective of ethics, Christianity is the only possible universal religion of mankind.

Universal Revelation

A differentiation between religion and faith or between religion and revelation has been commonly made. Following this distinction, Paul Tillich has rejected the idea of a universal religion in favor of a universal revelation. Of the final revelation he said:

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[14] Ferré, op. cit., p. 104.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 105.

[17] Ibid.

> The final revelation, the revelation in Jesus as the Christ is universally valid, because it includes the criterion of every revelation and is the finis or telos (intrinsic aim) of all of them . . . . It is the criterion of every religion and of every culture . . . . It is valid for the social existence of every human group and for the personal existence of every human individual. It is valid for mankind.[18]

Religion is the valid expression of faith, though its validity is always derived, and is never final in itself. Religion is constantly changing, but the revelation on which it is based is at least theoretically final. The Christian religion is never completely true to the final revelation in Jesus Christ on which it is based. However, it is the only religion which seeks to be true to the final revelation; therefore, Christianity should be transmitted by missionary effort with the purpose of making it the universal faith of mankind. The responsibility for making the Christian religion true to its revelation belongs to every Christian.

"Oceanic Christianity"

A more general approach to the universality of Christianity must be made. In this approach several perspectives are possible.

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[18] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 137.

Virgilius Ferm has approached the problem from the perspective of philosophy. He has set forth criteria for a good religion. These criteria include the requirements that a good religion should be reasonable, ethical, and vital. It "ought to move solidly upon universals rather than on provincial perspectives."[19] Dr. Ferm has pointed out the similarity of many doctrines, expressed in a variety of religions, and that even on the sub-human level many religious virtues are seen though called by different names. "This should surprise no one," he has said.

> If a good God there be, if the world is fundamentally sound, if all men are brothers under the skin, and all that the historic Christian tradition has assumed to be fundamental be true, then evidences should be found everywhere -- although perchance in some places more and some places less. I have never found palatable the doctrine that only in the Hebraic-Jewish-Christian tradition is the living reality of God to be found.[20]

Ideal religion requires metaphysical objectivity for the good and the true, and this objectivity is Reality. All men who have apprehended Reality are to be called Christians, because, "philosophically speaking, ought not Christianity be the name for an ideal religion."[21] Further, it is as appropriate to refer to Jesus as "the epitomization of reality as its best," as it is to say that he is the Son of God.[22]

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[19] Virgilius Ferm, "Oceanic Christianity," The Crozer Quarterly, XXIII, No. 1 (January, 1946), 9.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Religious ideals should be seen in terms of today, rather than in the perspective of their sources. Dr. Ferm has advocated, therefore, "oceanic Christianity" because, " . . . an ocean just is. It is not traceable to something else."[23] Oceanic Christianity is universal, and its universality should be emphasized rather than its uniqueness.

One can find very little reason for calling the ideal religion described by Dr. Ferm Christianity. One name should be as good as another. He has not really argued for a universal Christianity, but for a universal religion, philosophically conceived. Any religion philosophically conceived can never become universal, except in theory. To be real and vital, religion has to be rooted in history, even though history places many barriers to the achievement of universality.

A Religion For This Age

From a very different perspective, Leroy Waterman has made a moving appeal for the universal application of a religion of justice and mercy, based on the dire peril in which the world finds itself in this atomic age.[24] He has found all non-Christian religions disqualified to meet the need. Only Christianity is left and it is hopelessly divided. Dr. Waterman therefore has urged that Christianity be converted to the religion of Jesus. Even this ideal eventuality will not accomplish the desired purpose unless in each nation a majority of the people "make it their chief business in life to exemplify such conduct in all their personal relations."[25] If organized Christianity fails to effect this reconversion and leads the people of the world in the way of Jesus, then there is nothing

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[22] Ibid., p. 14.

[23] Ibid., p. 18.

> to prevent the rest of the world from accepting the unique insight of Jesus, which it may the more readily do as it comes to see that there is no other way of life open.[26]

Dr. Waterman has presented an appeal for missions, springing from the grassroots of the faith. He has rightly stated the urgency of the situation which demands men of good will in great numbers all over the world. However, the possibility of such a ground swell of faith in the religion of Jesus is greatly limited -- even impossible, humanly speaking. Time is running out. Dr. Waterman mentioned in his discussion "the greatest prophet of the exile" and his concept of "Israel as a servant."[27] A reference to the suffering servant would have been more pertinent, for, if the time of man on earth has come and destruction is immanent, another remnant may be called upon to bear the sins of many.

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[24] Leroy Waterman, "The Role of Religion in a New World Order," The Crozer Quarterly, XXIII, No. 2 (April, 1946), 113-126.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Fellowship in Religious Experience

Another approach to the problem of creating a world faith and the relation of Christianity to it has been made by Nels F. S. Ferre. Man's need for fellowship based on a common experience of God and motivated by His love emerges as the controlling concept in a world religion. Dr. Ferré has set forth the basic requirements of a world faith in his article, "A Religion for One World."[28] These requirements are: (1) it must be based on truth,[29] (2) it must make "cooperation central in the discovery of truth,"[30] and (3) cooperation itself must be "an essential part of the truth."[31] World faith can be achieved by the imperialistic thrust of one religion, or "it can come by the method of free inquiry ever rooted in cooperative concern."[32] Dr. Ferré has realized that universal religion cannot be the result of intellectual activity alone. "It must be born, not made. It will be called forth out of the womb of man's enlarged needs."[33] For the process out of which shall emerge a world religion, he has found that Dr. Hocking's method of Reconception "has much wisdom."[34] The religion which emerges may be new, or it may be one "now present in principle."[35] The present concern is not so much what shall be, as how it shall be. The how will help determine the what. The free inquiry must be at the deepest common level possible, and it must provide means of cooperative activity. "No religion should have externals which separate or are the occasions for superiority."[36] The total sense of the basis for achieving a world religion can be set down in the word fellowship: fellowship in thought and faith, fellowship in social concern and action, and fellowship in hope.

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[28] Nels F. S. Ferré, "A Religion for One World," *The Crozer Quarterly*, XXV (July, 1948), 230-240.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

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[32] Ibid., p. 230.

[33] Ibid., p. 236.

[34] Ibid., p. 233.

[35] Ibid., p. 234.

[36] Ibid., p. 235.

The possibility of achieving a world religion by the methods proposed here by Dr. Ferré must be examined. The question of communications arises as a key problem. How can the results of the cooperative enterprises proposed be communicated to the world's population? Is it the type of program in which only scholars can find meaningful and new experiences which form the basis for a common faith? Can the deep and passionate loyalties centered in religious symbols such as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Moses, and Buddha be held in check so that no religion has external symbols which "either separate or are occasions for superiority?"[37] Dr. Ferré faces this last question in his conclusion and affirms that he has surrendered the absoluteness of Christianity only "insofar as Christianity is conclusively open to truth and cooperative constructive activity."[38] The need for world unity in the fellowship of a common faith is so great that those who are able must take up the task for which Dr. Ferré has shown the way.

Authority and Freedom

There are other questions, however, which must be raised. What is the relation between authority and freedom? Religion requires some measure of authority -- complete authority in the case where it is demanded that one surrender his will to God's will, and the development of religion demands freedom in thought and in modes of worship. The institutions of religion demand some measure of authority and can destroy freedom, and freedom can destroy unity.

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[37] Ibid., p. 235.

[38] Ibid., p. 240.

Dr. Ferré has dealt with the problem of authority and freedom, not particularly from the perspective of the questions posed, but in a manner which answers them.

He has said, "that absolute authority inheres only in the will of God which is the source and centre of all concern for the common good."[39] Since God is love and it is the nature of love to bestow freedom, God's will makes freedom mandatory. This freedom involves real and riskful choice. "Agape," also, "includes by nature both the quality of belonging and the opportunity for creative self-expression."[40] The two demands of life, individual development and fellowship, seem to be the results of the creative concern of agape.

When men set themselves to the task of achieving a world religion, whether out of a felt need or by divine command, their concern must hold in balance, like God's love, the demands of both authority and freedom. Without God's love, all human strivings are vain, and whatever they achieve will be unrelated to reality. Agape as inclusive concern is the category in which the apparently absolutely opposed alternatives, authority and freedom can be united. Fellowship is the key concept which describes both the method and the results of achieving world religion.

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[39] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Authority and Freedom," The Crozer Quarterly, XXIX, No. 2 (April, 1952), 139.

[40] Ibid., p. 140.

There remains one question, "Has Christianity in any sense achieved the status of universal religion?" Henry P. Van Dusen gives his answer to this question in an article written as a result of a world cruise which had as its object the study of the Christian missionary movement and attendance of the Madras Conference. In the beginning he had certain pre-conceptions of the nature of the missionary movement which would have caused a less acute observer to find only what he was expecting to find. He found world Christianity.

> . . . The potential universality of Christianity -- its intrensic appropriateness for peoples of all races and cultures and stages of civilization -- is no longer a matter of theoretical argument. The "universality of Christian faith" is now proven by the only evidence which could be finally convincing and which is irrefutable -- its demonstrated capacity to meet the deepest needs, to win the fullest allegiance, and to become the chosen religion of members of representative men and women of every class and type within every principal race and culture of mankind.[41]

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[41] Henry P. Van Dusen, "World Christianity: Assumptions and Actuality," Religion in Life, IX (Winter, 1940), 51.

Christianity is a world religion, but, before it becomes the universal faith of mankind, much remains to be done, both in self-reconstruction and in relation to the precious heritages of other living faiths. Its purpose is not to destroy, but to fulfill every God given aspiration of mankind, past, present, and future.

In the approaches to the concept of world religion, each author whose work has been reviewed has thought in terms of Christianity as being directly involved in the results. These approaches have not been conceived in Biblical or institutional terms, but they have been honest and each author has been loyal to Jesus in terms of his understanding of Him.

CHAPTER IX

THE MISSION OF THE WORLD CHURCH

The modern Protestant missionary movement had its beginning toward the end of the eighteenth century among church people, but it was not an integral part of the organization of the churches. Charles W. Ranson has pointed out that,

> The modern missionary movement was the child of Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Revival . . . . It carried the Gospel to almost every country in the world and extended the Christian church to the ends of the earth.[1]

Evangelical Unity

The evangelical emphasis of the Great Awakening cut across denominational lines and gave the denominations accepting it a new theological basis for unity of action. This unity was rooted in the belief that a personal experience of salvation took precedence over doctrines non-essential to salvation which were the bases of denominational differences.

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[1] Charles Ranson, "Cult or Crusade," Christianity and Crisis, IX (March 21, 1949), 27. Cf. also Rufus M. Jones, "The Background and Objectives of Foreign Missions," The Crozer Quarterly, X (April, 1933), 136. "The modern missionary movement which thus came to birth in the closing years of the eighteenth century was demonstrably due to the great evangelical awakening of those decades."

The evangelistic imperative "to seek and to save the lost" became the guiding motive in a growing concern for people in non-Christian lands, and was the spiritual basis for foreign missions. This new spiritual reality coincided with the advance in world travel made possible by the great explorers. The colonization and trade activities of the nations of Western Europe provided missionaries with opportunities of travel and thus made possible a new geographic expansion of Christianity. The new catholic perspective based on a common evangelistic concern made possible interdenominational cooperation in the growing missionary enterprise.

The goal of "evangelical catholicity" has been presented by John A. Mackay in his effort to ground the ecumenical movement in Christian theology. After discussing certain truths which belong "to the inmost core of the Christian religion," he set forth the idea that Christian fellowship is the vehicle for "evangelical catholicity," rather than "any form of organization."[2]

> . . . The Church of Jesus Christ must be a pilgrim Church, whose discovery and proclamation of Christ and his Gospel must lead it to live on the missionary road, concerned about one thing, to be an instrument of his glory, that is to make God man-

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2. John A. Mackay, "A Theological Foreword to Ecumenical Gatherings," Theology Today, V (July, 1948), 149.

> ifest to men, in his judgment and in his mercy, both now and to the "journey's end."[3]

The present day missionary movement is seeking to conserve the evangelical principle which gave it birth and has nourished its growth. It is also seeking to correct the error of the historical necessity which forced the missionary movement outside the churches. W. Richey Hogg has shown how inter-denominational cooperation on the mission field has been a vital factor in the birth of the ecumenical movement.[4] The current emphasis of the International Missionary Council is on making the missionary obligation the central concern of the whole church. Evangelism is the missionary obligation of the church and it must be accepted by the whole church -- not a society of Christians. Dr. Ranson said in an address to the Board of Directors of the International Missionary Council.

> . . . There is, I believe, a growing conviction that unless the quest for unity is linked with a passion for evangelism, on a world scale, it will be sterile.[5]

This concern for evangelism is also the concern of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Ranson quoted a pertinent sentence from the Amsterdam Assembly Series.

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[3] Ibid., p. 150.

[4] William Richey Hogg, Ecumenical Foundations (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952).

[5] Charles Ranson, "The Church Is the Mission," Christianity and Crisis, XI (December 24, 1951), 173.

> If an ecumenical movement is not primarily a strategy of world wide evangelism, then it is nothing but an interesting academic exercise.[6]

It is Dr. Ranson's contention that the contemporary historical situation presents a challenge to the church similar to the situation which produced the birth of the modern missionary movement. There is a confluence of two movements. One movement has achieved the unification of the world by the miracles of modern transportation and communication. The second movement has achieved "the universal extension of the church."[7] Dr. Ranson has written,

> . . . the Christian task cannot be defined in terms of "historical process." Yet is is within the broad context of a unified word (sic. world) and an ecumenical church that a world wide strategy of evangelism must be wrought.[8]

There is increasing concern that the significance and message of the Church be understood, and that the Church accept its full responsibility in the modern world. The Christian world mission is at the heart of the responsibility for the Church. John A. Mackay has realized this in his call for the missionary movement to give "place to the missionary Church."[9]

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[6] Charles W. Ranson, "Cult or Crusade," Christianity and Crisis, IX (March 21, 1949), 26. Quotation from The Amsterdam Assembly Series, II, 116.

[7] Ibid., p. 27.

[8] Ibid.

[9] John A. Mackay, "The End Is The Beginning," Theology Today, V (January, 1949), 465.

Eugene L. Smith has conceived of the "missionary movement and the movement toward unity," as being equally the function of the ecumenical Church.[10] He has said that the word ecumenical "is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church in bringing the whole gospel to the whole world."[11]

That the leaders of the missionary movement have realized that the missionary task is the responsibility and the central mission of the ecumenical church has been noted by E. H. Johnson in his evaluation of the Willingen Conference, which "affirmed that the church exists for mission and in mission."[12] The ecumenical church is not divided "between 'the Christian West' and the 'non-Christian East.'"[13] It is one church and is in the world with its witness -- not "detached from the world regarding it from a position of superior righteousness or security."[14]

This is not the place to inquire about the failure of early Protestantism to correlate the missionary enterprise with its evangelistic concern. Suffice it to say that for many reasons the evangelistic world outreach of the church was neglected in the first phases of the Reformation. As a result, the missionary obligation of the church was later assumed by societies of Christians which operated on the periphery. However, since the missionary outreach is an essential function of the church, centripetal forces have operated to push missionary activity toward its place as an integral function of the church.

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[10] Eugene L. Smith, "Christ Calls to Unity and Mission," Religion in Life, XXIII (Spring, 1954), 256.

[11] Ibid.

[12] E. H. Johnson, "The World Mission and the World Church," Religion in Life, XXII (Spring, 1953), 203.

[13] Ibid., p. 204.

[14] Ibid.

The World Function is a
Necessary Function of the Church

Paul Tillich has defined the relation of the theological problems concerned with a doctrine of the church to those concerned with missions. He has said that "every activity of the Church must be derived from the foundation of the Church itself."[15] If, therefore, the missionary activity of Christian people is legitimate at all, it must, according to this principle, be a function of the church itself, and not a function of a society.

Dr. Tillich has identified missions with the church function of extension.

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[15] Paul Johannes Tillich, "The Theology of Missions," Christianity and Crisis, XV (April 4, 1955), 35. Reprinted with permission from the Occasional Bulletin of the Missionary Research Library in New York City, Vol. V, No. 10 (August 10, 1954).

> The Church extends itself by taking into its community new members, either individually or in groups of individuals. The function in which this happens is the missionary function which is never lacking even if there is no organized mission.[16]

He has also contributed two descriptive categories which are essential to his theology of missions: the church latent and the church manifest. The church exists continually in these two conditions. The church is "latent" in "paganism, Judaism, and humanism."[17] The church is "manifest" when adherents of paganism, Judaism, and humanism receive the "New Being in Jesus as the Christ."[18] It is the missionary function of the church to transform the "latent" church into the "manifest" church.[19]

The dividing line between the latent and the manifest church is the "center of history," which occurred with the manifestation of "the New Being in Jesus as the Christ."[20] The "center" divides history into two periods: before and after Jesus as the Christ. The division, however, is not chronological in its significance; rather, it is descriptive of the condition of men in relation to the New Being. At any given chronological time, "those who have accepted Jesus as the Christ are living after the center of history."[21]

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[16] Paul Tillich, Propositions, Part IV, IIbbl, p. 33.

[17] Ibid., p. 36.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 35.

The missionary activity of the church has supplied the "pragmatic proof" of the universality of the church, according to Dr. Tillich.[22] It is his view that pragmatic proof is the only kind of proof possible, because all theoretic proof is dependent on Christian presuppositions which are acceptable only to those within the Christian circle. Therefore, it is only by missionary activity which involves the risks of faith that the church can substantiate its claim to universality.[23]

Revolution in Missions

The growing consciousness within the church of its essential unity and evangelistic mission has brought about a "revolution in missions." The "revolution" has been characterized by the phrase "world mission of the church," according to Willis Church Lamott.[24] The phrase "foreign missions" did not adequately recognize the standing and responsibility of the so-called younger churches. The use of _missions_, plural, rather than _mission,_ singular, implied a fragmentation of the missionary enterprise in terms of sending agencies and their created subsidiaries. The new fact to be reckoned with is the ecumenical church. Both the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Christian Churches have recognized the need for a universal missionary approach directed toward both areas formerly known as sending or Christian countries and mission or heathen lands. According to Dr. Lamott, the _church_ with the world mission is a fellowship (_Koinonia_). "The invitation to accept Christ stands out as an invitation to join a fellowship . . . . Incorporation into the fellowship is the end of the conversion. A solitary believer is an impossibility."[25]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 37.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Willis Church Lamott, Revolution in Missions: From Foreign Missions to the World Mission of the Church (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 4.

The Church and Missions

The importance of the church was misunderstood by many in the period most greatly influenced by the modernist-fundamentalist controversy. Under the influence of extreme liberals the church was neglected in favor of promoting loyalty to Jesus and his ideals. Under the influence of evangelistic fundamentalism the church was neglected in favor of an emphasis on a conversion experience which assured salvation. Of the first group, John A. Mackay has said:

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[25] _Ibid._, pp. 4-5.

> There was a feeling in certain Christian circles, and in some mission fields more than in others, that the great thing was to get people to give their allegiance to Christian ideals, to Jesus as the supreme religious Figure and to think and live in accordance with His teaching and spirit. It thus came about that many of the ablest and most representative young Christians in new Christian communities preferred to express their Christianity in some form of institutional service . . . than in the direct service of the church.[26]

This same concept of the church in relation to the aims of missions and evangelism produced a kind of Christian known as "Christophile." Such a person loved Jesus, accepted his ideals, and in many cases rendered humanitarian service in his name, but refused baptism into the Christian church.[27]

Dr. Mackay pointed out that the year 1910, the year of the Edinburg Conference, was also the year of the Mexican Revolution, and that revolution has characterized the years since.[28] He then drew a vivid contrast of the results of the work of the "Christophiles" and the results of organized Christian churches.

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[26] John A. Mackay, "The Great Commission and the Church Today," Ch. X, *Missions Under the Cross, Addresses Delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, in Germany, 1952; with Statements Issued by the Meeting*, Norman Goodall, ed. (London: Edinburg House Press, Published for the International Missionary Council, 1953), p. 138.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

> Today, forty-two years after the Mexican revolution, all that is left in many parts of the world to represent Jesus Christ is a baptized community. But thank God such communities exist, and their witness is unashamed, in the midst of revolution and persecution, on both sides of sinister curtains.[29]

The ecumenical movement is centering new attention upon the nature and function of the church, as well as upon Christian unity. Much ground work has been laid, and the prospects are that American scholars will devote more serious work on these matters than anytime in the past.

What are the possibilities of success for the evangelistic mission of the church? Kenneth Scott Latourette has faced this question and has offered three possible answers:

> . . . Will every man become a Christian? If so, will that profession of faith be more than nominal? Will all men and all human society eventually attain to the "fullness of the stature of Christ and be a complete embodiment of the Christian ideal? Or to go to the other extreme, will Christianity completely disappear from the earth and the Gospel message be entirely forgotten, except by historians, and then only as a passing phase of man's long pilgrimage? Or will the future see a middle course between these two extremes, with the growing in extent and influence, but matched by mounting forces of evil until the human drama on this planet is brought

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[29] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

> to an end, either by a long term process or by a sudden, cataclysmic event?[30]

To answer these questions, Dr. Latourette has cited the paradoxical answers of the Bible. According to one Biblical view, God has declared his purpose to save the world. The contradictory Biblical view has been stated by Jesus to the effect that the way to destruction is broad ~~and~~ many travel it.[31] However, common convictions underlie these contradictory answers. "In both God is the ruler of the universe," and "history is to have a consumation."[32]

The answers of history are also paradoxial. While living on earth, "Jesus appeared inconsequential."[33] Paradoxically, "he has come to be the most influential individual who has ever lived on this planet."[34] Some of mankind's worst evils and greatest accomplishments are to be found in Christendom."[35] Some of the efforts of the greatest missionaries have apparently been frustrated, but none has died with a sense of frustration, and more has been accomplished by their labors than they have dared dream to be possible.[36]

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[30] K. S. Latourette, "What Can We Expect in the World Mission?" The International Review of Missions, XL, No. 158 (April, 1951), 141.

[31] Ibid., pp. 142-1943.

[32] Ibid., p. 143.

[33] Ibid., p. 144.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p. 146.

It is the opinion of Dr. Latourette that history indicates that the church will never win the allegiance of all mankind and that men's lives will never completely conform to the requirements of the gospel.[37] Yet, God's purpose will be accomplished, whether in history or beyond history. Man "can only confidently trust that it is the purpose of God and is to be 'in the fullness of time.'"[38]

Conclusion

The following points of emphasis are pertinent to the mission of the world church:

(1) Since the modern Protestant missionary enterprise came into being as a society movement largely outside the church, the full force of the church has not been felt in the Christian outreach to the non-Christian world.

(2) The missionary movement created world Christianity by calling into being small but not insignificant churches in "mission lands." The reality of world Christianity was fully apparent at the Madras Conference, 1938.

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[36] Ibid., p. 147.

[37] Ibid., p. 148.

[38] Ibid.

(3) The Ecumenical Church is a present reality, but much needs to be done to implement the unity represented by it and to make it a more potent spiritual force in the world.

(4) The mission of the church must be the mission of the whole church to the whole world, and must be grounded in the necessary function of the church.

CHAPTER X

THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE

The Christian message proclaimed for the salvation of the world must be understood and theologically justified by every preacher and missionary. The understanding of the gospel may never be clearly defined and the justification of the selection of the elements of the message may never be formalized, but the processes are inevitable. Basic theological perspectives determine the content of the message and the methods of the missionary. For this reason the theological perspectives of mission boards who select candidates and determine the areas of labor, both geographically and methodologically, become important. The more successful the labors of the missionaries are in fulfilling the expectations of their sending boards, the more important the perspectives of the boards become to the total life of the church. Since theological positions like fundamentalism and liberalism cut across denominational lines, the struggle between the two factions has often centered around missionary policy. If a large minority does not feel itself properly represented on the mission boards of the denomination, an independent board is formed. If the minority is small, individuals dissatisfied with the situation will give their support to missionary boards with similar theological views.

There are different types of boards: denominational, interdenominational, and non-denominational. In general, the denominational and interdenominational boards have tended to be moderately liberal and evangelical, and the non-denominational boards have tended to be radically fundamentalist with a disproportionate emphasis upon the premillennial second coming of Christ. Both liberals and fundamentalists have sought to gain control of denominational mission boards. An illustration of what has been involved in this struggle can be found in the rise of The Modern Missionary Movement.

The Modern Missionary Movement

Archibald G. Baker has written an article describing "The Modern Missionary Movement,"[1] which was organized to make the impact of liberal theology more formative in its influence on the missionary enterprise.

> Now for the first time, some of those who represent the more liberal wing among the friends of missions have banded themselves together for the furtherance of convictions and ideals which at present do not find adequate outlet in the normal activities of their respective missions.[2]

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[1] Archibald G. Baker, "The Modern Missionary Movement," The Journal of Religion, XV (April, 1935), 176-190.

[2] Ibid., p. 189.

These convictions and ideals require a greater correlation between conversion and social development, the expansion of Christianity by "the unhurried permeation of the total life of communities by the spirit of Christ,"[3] and the recognition of the validity of non-Christian religions as a means of personal relation with God.[4]

The founders of The Modern Missionary Movement have clearly recognized the relation between basic theological presuppositions and the nature of the missionary enterprise.

A letter of inquiry to the editor of the Journal of Religion concerning the Movement was referred by the editor to R. Pierce Beaver for reply.[5] Dr. Beaver's reply is a brief commentary on American missionary theology from the Laymen's Inquiry to World War II.

> The Movement arose out of the concern on the part of liberals committed to the world mission lest the comprehensive approach be given up by the boards and societies in favor of a narrowly dogmatic evangelistic program alone. It was the result of the heated rejection of the theological presuppositions of the Laymen's Inquiry by the American boards and the influence of Barthian theology in Continental European mission circles. The latter came to full

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[3] Ibid., p. 182.

[4] Ibid., pp. 182-183.

[5] Dr. Beaver was until recently director of the Missionary Research Library, 3041 Broadway, New York, 27, New York. He is now a member of The Federated Theological Faculty, The University of Chicago.

> expression in Hendrik Kraemer's book, The Christian Message In A Non-Christian World, prepared for the Madras Conference.
>
> As theological liberalism became equated in the popular mind with secular humanism, the mission boards grew suspicious of the Movement and failed to cooperate with it to any degree. It was thus deprived of contacts which would have made its work fruitful.
>
> On the other hand, the rejection of the theological presuppositions of the Laymen's Report did not result in the narrowing of the prevailing theological presuppositions of the American church boards and did not give rise to any less emphasis on education, medicine, rural work, and the like in the program. Then when the Kraemer view failed to capture the Madras Conference and Anglo-Saxon missionary agencies on the whole did not adhere to the Kraemer doctrine of discontinuity in revelation, the promoters of the Movement came to the conclusion that their fears were groundless and that the Movement was unnecessary. Consequently, it dissolved just about the time the United States entered the war.[6]

The missionary enterprise is concerned with two movements with which it has been closely associated in the past: the evangelistic movement and the ecumenical movement. The theology of the missionary message has to take into consideration the theological implications of both movements and determine its relation to them.

The Missionary Message and Evangelism

The missionary message of the Christian faith is not essentially different from its evangelistic message. Both represent the Christian thrust into the non-Christian world.

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[6] Letter dated November 9, 1955.

There have been and will continue to be differences in points of emphasis due to the differences in the situations of the hearers of the message. The problem, for example, involved in presenting the Christian message to a non-Christian in a "Christian community" where any person disposed to be religious is disposed to be Christian is different from the evangelistic problem in a non-Christian religious community where a hearer of the Christian message would either be an adherent of another religion or disposed toward it. The outreach of the Christian faith to non-Christians in all situations is founded upon God's saving purpose seen and made effective in Jesus Christ.

The Missionary Message and Ecumenical Theology

While the missionary movement has given invaluable assistance to the movement toward Christian unity, it must be remembered that this assistance has been a by-product of the Christian world mission. There must be, of course, an area of coincidence in missionary theology and ecumenical theology.

Georgia Harkness has sought to show that the minimum theological propositions of the Christian faith apply equally to the ecumenical and missionary movements.[7] She has identified six elements which must be included in the theology of the ecumenical movement: (1) It must be Christ-centered; (2) The incarnation of God must be seen in Jesus; (3) The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith must both be emphasized; (4) Witness to the Kingdom of God must be maintained; (5) The Church, which is a complementary term of the Kingdom of God, must be recognized as the primary means of fulfilling "the end and goal of the Christian enterprise"; and (6) The Bible is the source of "basic faith."[8]

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[7] Georgia Harkness, "The Theological Basis for the Missionary Message," The International Review of Missions, XXVIII (October, 1939), 520.

While recognizing that more theology is needed in the missionary enterprise, Dr. Harkness has cautioned that "we ought never to suppose that 'the Faith by which the Church lives' is a theological structure -- much less any of the particular theological structures which are now rival claimants in the field."[9] Neither can a system of theology itself be a motive for a sustained effort in Christian missions.

> Not theological agreement but common loyalty to Christ and fellowship in the Christian task stand at the heart of the missionary movement.[10]

Dr. Harkness did not intend a comprehensive statement of missionary theology. Her purpose apparently has been the valuable one of showing the relatedness of the ecumenical and missionary movements by pointing out that the minimum theological propositions of the Christian faith apply equally to both.

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 520-525.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 519.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 526.

It must be emphasized, however, that a developed missionary theology will not coincide in purpose or scope with a developed ecumenical theology. Ecumenical theology must cover the whole range of Christian doctrine.[11] On the other hand, a theology of missions, while vitally affected by the whole range of Christian doctrine, must come to a focus in specific problems such as the validity and universality of the Christian faith, and the meaning and means of salvation.[12]

The Christian missionary enterprise has been constantly faced with the ecumenical problem in the performance of its tasks. The constant pressure of the non-Christian world on the mind of the missionary tends to change his theological perspective. The inner drive of the Christian faith toward unity has always been intensified by the insecurities of the mission fields. These facts will cause the missionary movement to supply zeal and a sense of urgency as well as a theological perspective to the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical movement can be expected to provide an increasingly unified basis for missionary witness as well as a more adequate ecclesiastical structural support of all missionary endeavor.

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[11] Walter Marshall Horton's recent book, Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), has been designed as a textbook for classes in Systematic Theology. In one phase of this method, he has sought to show the areas in which there is a theological consensus in the ecumenical movement. This approach is valuable, and should be pursued, but it should be remembered that ecumenical theology must be more than consensus theology.

[12] Cf. Chapter II of this study.

Four Theological Perspectives

The emphases of the missionary message are determined by the theological perspectives of the messenger. In the following summaries, four theological positions are examined insofar as they affect the Christian missionary message. These are: the liberal position represented by Hugh Vernon White and Edmund D. Soper; the fundamentalist position represented by Harold Lindsell; the "post-critical" theology of Nels F. S. Ferre; and the "bridge-building" theology of Paul Tillich.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Lord

Hugh Vernon White

The theology of missions of Hugh Vernon White centers in Jesus who is the perfect revelation of God's ideal for human life. Ultimate truth is moral and religious and, therefore, personal. Jesus embodies the truth, and "his truth is the truth about man's nature as a moral person . . . . There is nothing beyond Jesus in this realm."[13] Jesus is Lord, for individuals and for society. He is Lord for those who accept God's will as revealed in him.

Because humanity is the object of God's love, the welfare of humanity is the object of all missionary activity.

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[13] Hugh Vernon White, A Theology for Christian Missions (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), p. 118.

Whatever the relationship of Christianity with non-Christian religions, the goal of the Christian mission is that all men should be like Jesus. The community of men of good will is the object of God's purpose. "If this assumption is not sound, then it is nonsense to look to Christianity for a working faith."[14] Christianity is therefore the ultimate religion and represents what God wills for the human race.

Dr. White has made a valuable contribution to the theology of missions in his emphasis upon the relation of human need to the purpose of God. He has, however, understated the doctrine of God's sovereignty and Christ's divinity. The social relevance of the gospel has been well stated, but he has not taken sufficiently into account the radical nature of sin both in individuals and society.

Edmund D. Soper

Jesus made an original contribution to the concept of God through his relation with Him and his reliance upon Him. Christianity is a religion of revelation and the revelation is in the person of Jesus Christ. The God and Father of Jesus is concerned for all men, as a shepherd for a lost sheep.[15] Not only did Jesus reveal God, but God revealed Himself in Jesus. Dr. Soper said: "Here we come very close to the heart of the Christian message, that Jesus Christ was such a being that God could be revealed through him."[16] The church has consistently maintained that Jesus is both human and divine, "and we can say this even if we cannot offer a complete explanation if its meaning."[17]

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[14] Hugh Vernon White, A Working Faith for the World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 191.

[15] Edmund D. Soper, The Philosophy of Christian Missions (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 131.

The death and resurrection of Jesus were significant for the formation of the Christian community and in the formulation of the first creed, "Jesus is Lord."

The gospel of salvation is predicated upon man's sin and upon God's redemptive purpose. The magnitude of man's sin is to be understood in light of Jesus' death on the cross. The coming of Jesus was related to man's sin. The angel said to Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sin."[18]

The salvation which Jesus wrought is centered in this life as a present reality and in the next life as a hope of continued spiritual reality. Dr. Soper pointed out that Christianity gives confidence in the certainty of eternal life, but has supplied only a few details about it. The Christian message to pagan lands, according to Dr. Soper, is "the gospel of eternal life, of which Christians have the assurance."[19]

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[16] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[18] *Ibid.*

Dr. Soper has not attempted a theological explanation of the elements of the gospel which he has selected as being especially pertinent to the missionary message. He has, however, sought to take into consideration the enormity of man's sin and the magnitude of God's grace without falling into the extremes of Barthian theology.

The Gospel of the Word of God

Harold Lindsell

The theological position of Harold Lindsell is founded upon the universal experience of sin by man; the sovereignty of God's grace; the redemption made possible by the person and work of Christ; his second coming as the consumation of history; and the validation of all religious truth in the inerrant Bible. These basic doctrines are developed in accordance with the fundamentalist position and related to the Christian missionary enterprise. The strength of his position is found in his absolute reliance upon the authority of God's revelation of Himself and His will in the Bible which he believes is inerrant in every part. This allows Dr. Lindsell a complete surety of conviction which he says is not based on irrational grounds, but supra-rational.[20] This also is the greatest weakness of his position because, if this armor is ever pierced, not only the Christian missionary enterprise, but the whole Christian faith, will come tumbling down like the walls of Jericho.[21]

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

The real absolute to which the Scriptures bear witness is God who has revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been over-stated by Dr. Lindsell. He said: "Jesus actually is God and in Himself does not reflect the Eternal One, but He is the true Eternal One."[22] This is not the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son.

Salvation involves, according to Dr. Lindsell, an obedience to the teachings of the Bible in this life and the present blessings of the Christian life, but its primary emphasis is upon life in heaven. All of those who are not "in Christ" are going to hell, regardless of their opportunities for hearing the word.[23] The end of the age and the final separation of the saved and the lost will be brought about by the second coming of the Son of God. This hoped-for event can only happen when the world has been evangelized by the Church.[24] This does not mean that the consumation of the age is the work of man, but that man cannot simply wait for it. He must fulfill the condition which God has laid upon him as his part in the final fulfillment of God's purpose for the world.[25]

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[20] Harold Lindsell, A Christian Philosophy of Missions (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 64.

[21] Ibid., p. 66.

[22] Ibid., p. 50.

[23] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

The necessary social implications of the Christian message have been under-emphasized by Dr. Lindsell.

The Gospel of Love

Nels F. S. Ferré

> Let us define love as the form of being which acts out of complete concern not only for all, in all dimensions of life, and the conditions which sustain, promote and enhance life, but also for even new life and new conditions of life.[26]

For Nels F. S. Ferré the controlling category for understanding God and His purpose for men is love. The aspect of love pertinent to a missionary theology is "complete concern," which defines God's purpose in relation to His creation. The supreme revelation of God's concern is the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the Incarnation, "we can know who God is, what He wants, does, and can do through this revelation of His eternal self."[27] The love of God, Agape, was "conclusively" revealed in Jesus. The intent of the Incarnation and of the life and work of Jesus was the release of Agape in the world in matchless fullness.

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[24] Ibid., pp. 190-191.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Understanding of God (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 15-16.

Agape known in Jesus Christ created a fellowship centered in him. This fellowship which is the basis of the Christian Church has, so far as it has been true to its divine energy, manifested the concern of Agape for the redemption of mankind. The highest motive for the Christian world mission is created by this love. Lesser motives on the human level are possible and even necessary,[28] but love as "complete concern" is the ultimate motive, because it is grounded in God himself. The love of God will ultimately complete its redemptive work, and all mankind will know the salvation of God.

Dr. Ferré is convinced "that Christianity is man's ultimate religion because it is God's supreme revelation."[29]

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[27] Ibid., p. 188.

[28] Nels F. S. Ferré, "Fear, Duty and Love as Ultimate Motives for Christian Missions," The International Review of Missions, XXXVII (October, 1948), 393-402.

[29] Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Faith (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. ix.

The ultimate is expressed on various levels: human, historic, progressive, and religious.

On the human level, love unites the good and the right in Christian fellowship. The fellowship cannot be completely realized in history, but when man "lives for fellowship he has satisfied his deepest need."[30]

In the arena of history, Christianity is subject to the forces operating on all other religions and the religious consciousness of mankind. Dr. Ferré believes that Christianity is ultimate, unique, and absolute.[31] The principle of exclusion, demanded by its uniqueness, operates to protect against any change in the essential nature of Christianity. The principle of exclusion may be stated as follows:

> All that is inconsistent in profession and practice with the nature of Christianity as sacrificial, creative good will centered in God, and first fully revealed and made effective as light and life in Jesus Christ must be done away.[32]

The principle of exclusion also provides the principle of inclusion whereby all things "creative of good will" are received appreciatively. This principle of inclusion provides the area of fruitful relationships with non-Christian religions and inter-cultural exchange.

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30. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Does Christianity offer any hope of progress? Technological progress has been clearly evident, but what of the possibility of the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose? The Kingdom of God represents the pull of God's redemptive purpose. On the spiritual level man received Agape, "the New Testament kind of love . . . which is supremely concerned with the welfare of others without thought of their worthiness or reward."[33] ~~This love~~ which was "first fully revealed and made effective as light and life in Jesus Christ,"[34] creates fellowship. In the reception of Agape, "the Christian Church is the extension of the Incarnation, the continuity of the consciousness of Christ . . . ."[35] This love suffers in history and "is the love of the Cross. Christ, the Church, and the Cross -- this is Christianity."[36] The Church has grown; that is, it has made extensive progress. "Missions must soon turn more and more intensive."[37]

Christianity represents "the very purpose of God for man without which progress itself becomes an evil." The mission of the Church lies in its responsibility to demand "that the creative order conform increasingly to its redemptive goal."[38]

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Cf. fn. 32.

[35] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[36] Ibid., p. 72.

[37] Ibid., p. 73. Willis Lamott's Revolution in Missions indicates the need for this kind of "intensive" mission in all the world.

The religious ultimate is Agape made effective for man's redemption through the Atonement. In Dr. Ferré's words: "In the Atonement especially, God in Jesus becomes our religious ultimate."[39] By God's forgiveness, man's sin is cured, and by God's grace man is included in the fellowship of God and man. Fellowship is thus seen to be an essential concept of Christianity. It is the missionary task of the Christian Church to enlarge the fellowship by proclaiming the gospel of God's redeeming love in Christ. According to Dr. Ferré, "Salvation is the finding of fellowship in the Spirit of Christ through the forgiving grace of God."[40]

As Dr. Ferré has constructed his theological position, he has been constantly aware of both the fundamentalist and liberal positions, and has sought to avoid the weaknesses of each one. This could not be done if the presuppositions of either position were adopted. His contribution has been possible because he has started with the belief that "God is love (agape)." Since it is the nature of love to have relationships, and to affect the nature of the person loved, redemption is both individual and social. Further, the Christian message does not make a primary appeal for acceptance, but for a response to the love of God. The intellectual nature of the Christian message which the liberal attitude toward truth required is not a matter of primary emphasis in the presentation of the missionary message as the "gospel of love." On the other hand, the acceptance of propositions of faith required by the fundamentalists has to give way to the primary need of existential decision in response to a confrontation of God's love. The missionary message required by Dr. Ferré's theology might well be summarized in the words of Jesus, "For God so loved the world . . . ."[41]

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

The Gospel of the New Being

"If the Christian message is understood as the message of the 'New Being,' an answer is given to the question implied in our present situation and in every human situation."[42]

These words of Paul Tillich indicate the nature of his understanding of the Christian message for the world. "The New Being is a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning, and hope," and is manifest in Jesus as the

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[41] John 3:16.

[42] Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 49.

Christ,[43] who is the bearer of the final revelation.[44]

The Gospel of the "New Being" is related to the Christian understanding of history, which has its meaning in the Kingdom of God.[45] History is filled with ambiguities, "but the Kingdom of God is the symbol for an unambiguous situation . . . ."[46] The Kingdom is always beyond history, "but it is fulfilled through history."[47] The Church, which is in history, is the agent of the Kingdom of God, which is beyond history.

The key to Dr. Tillich's theology of missions is found in the following statement:

> The third statement about the Christian interpretation of history is that the moment in which the meaning of history becomes fully manifest is to be called the center of history, and that this center is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. In this center the contradictions of historical existence are overcome, in "beginning and power."[48]

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., p. 150.

[45] Paul Tillich, "The Theology of Missions," Missionary Research Library, Occasional Bulletin, V, No. 10 (August 10, 1954), 1.

[46] Ibid., p. 2.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

The concepts of the "latent" and the "manifest" church have already been discussed. It should be stated here, however, that the focal point of Dr. Tillich's theology of missions is found in the goal of the church to transform itself from its latent to its manifest form. The latent church, it is to be remembered, is composed of paganism, Judaism, and humanism, and the manifest church is composed of those who have received the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

In defining the task of Christian missions, Dr. Tillich has pointed out several things which have been conceived by one group or another to be the task of missions, but which he says the church must not attempt. These are: (1) the salvation of individual souls from eternal damnation, (2) the cross-fertilization of culture, and (3) the unification of the religions of the world.[49] Those who plan the specific goals of missions always do so in accordance with the demands of their theological positions. Dr. Tillich, who has said that he is not an expert on missions, has approached the problem of aims from a negative point of view, with the exception of a statement of the primary aim of Christian missions stated in the preceding paragraph.

This theology of missions answers the following problems. First is the problem of a central symbol. Jesus as the Christ is the manifestation of the New Being and cannot be confused with or replaced by another symbol. No one else has completely sacrificed himself to the Christ or become completely transparent to the ground of being. Second, non-Christian religions are a part of the latent Church. "People are not _outside_ of God; they are _grasped_ by God, on the level in which they _can_ be grasped . . . ."[50]

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Third, no form of Christianity can be regarded as final. Christianity does not belong to the West, but to the world. This is the significance of the new churches in the East. All forms of Christianity, and all parts of the latent church "stand under the judgment of the New Being in Christ."[51] Finally, the motive of missions might be summarized in these words: "In some way and on some level, every human being is longing for a new reality in contrast to the distorted reality in which he is living."[52] The missionary message must be stated in terms which answer this universal longing.

The Problem of Communication

Theological problems are involved in the communication of the missionary message. One problem is posed by the question of the universality of human nature. Has separate cultural development so conditioned the lives of people in some areas of the world that they do not ask the existential questions answered by the Christian faith? If they do ask these questions, can the missionary communicate the Christian message to them because basic Christian concepts have been greatly influenced by the language and culture of the West? Is there any religious significance in the proclamation of the gospel by preaching? Can "points of contact" be found in non-Christian religions and cultures which will not affect the essence of the Christian message?

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[50] _Ibid._, p. 5.

[51] _Ibid._, p. 6.

[52] _Ibid._, p. 5.

Communication and the Existential Problem

According to Dr. Tillich, the communication of the Gospel takes place when it is presented so that people can make a decision for or against it.[53] Is this decision possible for some people and not for others? The Gospel can be communicated to all who "participate in human existence."[54] This answer has many critics who, because "of the varied environments of peoples," will not accept the view that human nature and destiny may be spoken of "as if these were universals."[55] Yet, the Christian theologian must believe that these critics are wrong, and "communicate the Gospel as a message of man understanding his own predicament."[56] This method assumes that "the structures of anxiety of conflicts, of guilt" are "in other people" as they are in us.[57]

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[53] Paul Tillich, "Communicating the Gospel," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, VII, No. 4 (June, 1952), 3.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., p. 4.

> . . . Whether we shall succeed in this nobody knows. This is the risk we must take. It is a risk which missionaries have always taken. It cannot be replaced by evidence. We cannot use evidence to tell people that human nature is like this. We can do it only in terms of risk.[58]

Communication of the Gospel to people of the ancient and developed religions of Asia is made difficult because "their human nature ~~is~~ so formed that they do not ask the questions to which the gospel gives the answer."[59] The Christian message must be communicated by participation, but this limits one's ability to communicate the message, because "our participation is inevitably limited. Missionaries understand this well."[60] The Christian message communicates a "New Reality" "which gives us the power to take anxiety upon ourselves."[61] The conquest of anxiety is made possible by a "power from beyond existence which for us is verifiable by participation."[62]

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[56] Ibid. Cf. "The knowledge of revelation can be received only in the situation of revelation, and it can be communicated -- in contrast to ordinary knowledge -- only to those who participate in this situation." Tillich, Systematic Theology, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 129.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., p. 5.

[60] Ibid.

The part of his discussion of communicating the gospel pertinent to missionary theology is Dr. Tillich's assumption that all who participate in existence can receive the message of the gospel to the degree that a decision can be made for or against it. This assumption is identical with the Biblical faith that man is created in the image of God, and Dr. Tillich is right in his statement that the proclamation of the gospel by missionaries is predicated upon the risk that this is the truth.

Communication and Cultural Problems

Henry P. Van Dusen's article dealing with the problem of communication is concerned with the problem of presenting the gospel which has become meaningful to Western Christianity in Greek thought forms to those for whom these forms are meaningless. His solution of the problem is that the gospel can be explained more truly in its original Hebraic categories.[63] In his opinion the Gospel should be presented "as it appears in the pages of the New Testament.[64] This is "the only guiding principle of Christian missions."[65] He has recognized, however, that the problem cannot be completely solved in this manner, because it must be presented in the languages of the hearers. These languages do not lend themselves easily to this translation, because non-Christian terms "can never be fully recast for Christian usage."[66] On this basis

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[63] Henry P. Van Dusen, "The Articulate Word. The Problem of Communication," *International Review of Missions*, XXXVI (October, 1947), 496.

> non-Christian philosophy or religion can never be more than a most inadequate and unsatisfactory, if not perilous, preparatio evangelica.[67]

The problem of communication is continuous and each generation must find its own middle way between ancient and modern thought forms for communicating the gospel.[68]

The Missionary Sermon

Paul E. Davies has made a study of the Acts of the Apostles and of Pauline Epistles to determine the missionary content of Paul's sermons preached to win converts. His study confirmed J. Weiss' conclusion that

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 498.

[65] *Ibid.* Dr. Van Dusen did not deal with the problem raised by the writing of the New Testament in Greek, and the problem of Hellenized Jewish communities.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 497.

> the missionary sermon was meant not only to give instruction, to create a conviction, but was a means of preparing the way for the supernatural working of God.[69]

It is Dr. Davies' view that this "supernatural accompaniment"[70] explains "how Paul would turn away from a rationalistic explanation of his gospel."[71] The sermon furnished the occasion "for the hidden action of the Spirit."[72]

The method set forth here is based on the theological proposition that the Holy Spirit accomplishes God's purpose using human instrumentality.

Communication and Points of Contact

Another method used in the missionary enterprise which has its basis in the theology of missions is described in the term "point of contact." The implication is that there is an element in a non-Christian religion which has a sufficient degree of Christian truth that it can serve as a beginning place for teaching the gospel. The classic illustration for this method is found in Paul's sermon on Mars Hill.[73] The missionary method which utilizes the point of contact is related to the goal to establish in any given land an indigenous Christianity. In order to attain this goal, those converted to Christianity must be allowed to develop a form of Christianity consistent with their thought patterns and customs. This is the point of Dr. Van Dusen's insistence that the missionary should explain the gospel in its original Hebraic categories and that he should not insist on the historic creeds which made Christianity indigenous to Greek thought patterns.[74] In several articles reviewed in this survey, references have been made which have been pertinent to this problem; however, the point of the reference has been consistent with the author's own theological position.

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[69] Paul E. Davies, "Paul's Missionary Method," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XVI, No. 4 (October, 1948), 211. Cf. J. Weiss, *The History of Primitive Christianity*, p. 250.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] Acts 17:23-28.

K. S. Latourette has dealt with this problem specifically from the historical perspective. According to his findings, no uniform rule has been followed by missionaries toward the conversion of pre-Christian beliefs, customs, and institutions.[75]

In his opinion, the practice of finding "points of understanding and contact" is acceptable, "so long as it does no violence to the Christian message."[76] Here, precisely, is the point of conflict. To what degree will the missionary impose his judgment of what "does no violence to the Christian message" upon the interpretation of the new convert. Here again is the problem of authority and freedom in the development of a faith that maintains its genius while allowing individual differences.

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[74] Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 496.

[75] K. S. Latourette, "Indigenous Christianity in the Light of History," The International Review of Missions, XXIX (October, 1940), 439.

[76] Ibid., p. 440.

Again the historical perspective of Dr. Latourette is pertinent.

> What does seem to be uniform in the experience of transplanting and enabling it [the Christian gospel] to take firm rootage is the achievement of an indigenous leadership and a maximum of self-government.[77]

The problem will not diminish as the missionary movement expands, but will become more and more important. This is especially true where missionaries are forced to withdraw and leave their "new churches entirely in the hands of those who are comparatively new in the faith and who will be subjected to the full force of non-Christian secular ideologies. To use Dr. Tillich's word, this will be the "pragmatic" test of their labors.

The Influence of Missionary Theology on American Theology

Kenneth Scott Latourette has written an interesting article in which he has set forth the influence which the missionary enterprise has had on specific Christian attitudes and doctrines in American life. The following Christian doctrines have been required by Christian missions: (1) All men possess infinite worth, (2) God is concerned for the welfare of all men, (3) it is possible for man to improve in this life and the next, with God's help, (4) it is necessary for individual Christians to work for the achievement of these ideals.[78] He is aware that the missionary spirit which reflects these beliefs "is by no means dominant." "Yet," he is convinced, "it must be reckoned with by any one who would understand the United States."[79] It is Dr. Latourette's view that these Christian doctrines have been brought into sharper focus in American thought by the drive for public support of Christian missions.

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[77] *Ibid.*

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[78] Kenneth Scott Latourette, "The Effect of the Missionary Enterprise upon the American Mind," Religion in Life, XIII (Winter, 1943-1944), 53-70.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

CHAPTER XI

THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, theological liberalism has been a dominant factor in the theological thought in America, and it has been important since the time of William E. Channing. According to Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen, there have been four main types of liberalism. He labeled the first scientific liberalism because its adherents boldly entered the thought of the fast developing physical sciences to find the reality of God. A second type of liberalism was created by those who reacted against the advance of science and turned to a fresh study of Plato for a revived Christian Platonism. A third type of liberalism was based on the philosophical foundation laid by Hegel, and is aptly named speculative liberalism. The larger group of theologians turned to the findings of biblical criticism and centered their attention on the historic Jesus. From this emphasis developed evangelical liberalism.[1]

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[1] Henry P. Van Dusen, "A Half-Century of Liberal Theology," Religion in Life, V (Summer, 1936), 338.

All phases of liberalism have been important in moulding the mind-set of American Christianity. Evangelical liberalism has been dominant, but it has been influenced by types of liberalism which have diverged more widely from the traditional forms of Christian doctrine.

What is liberalism? It would seem that in the light of its widespread influence in the religious life of America that it should be an easy task to define. Yet, it is not a simple task to say precisely what liberalism is or what liberals believe. This is true because it is in part a protest against types of religious thinking usually described by such terms as orthodoxy, fundamentalism, traditionalism, and neo-orthodoxy. The elements in non-liberal forms of thought which it rejects are authoritarianism, legalism, and supernaturalism. Liberals are also widely divergent in the forms in which they express their thought because they turn to a variety of sources for the bases of their thought, such as a particular type of science or a particular philosophy. Further, liberal thinkers come from many denominations, and these denominational backgrounds influence their patterns of thinking.

Daniel D. Williams used the term "liberal theology" to

> stand for that movement in modern theology which sought to bring Christian doctrine into organic relation with the scientific knowledge, with the

> evolutionary world view, and the movement for ethical and social reconstruction of the nineteenth century.[2]

Despite the difficulties which confront one who attempts to state the meaning of liberalism, there are areas of general agreement which enable one to come to definite conclusions about the philosophical and theological presuppositions of liberalism, and which afford one the ability to recognize certain identifying characteristics of liberalism. This does not mean that any individual thinker who possessed one or more of these characteristics would possess them all. The characteristics of liberalism are separable.[3] There is no logical coherence binding all the positions expressed in the various types of liberalism into one unified system of thought.

Presuppositions

There are two necessary presuppositions of liberalism. First, man has sufficient resources to meet his needs. Second, God is immanent in His universe and acts through nature, and not above it.

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[2] Daniel D. Williams, "The Perplexity and the Opportunity of the Liberal Theology in America," The Journal of Religion, XXV (July, 1945), 168 (fn. 1).

[3] Henry E. Kolbe, "What Is Liberalism?" Religion in Life, XXIII (Autumn, 1954), 560: "Even a casual analysis of current discussion will reveal that these meanings are not simply discernable but separable."

The sufficiency of man has three corollary presuppositions. (1) Reason, which is a natural and distinguishing characteristic of man, enables him to find the religious truth he needs to know.[4] (2) Truth does not need to be taught man by any supernatural means. (3) Man does not need supernatural intervention in his behalf.

In liberalism, the doctrine of God's imanence is an emphasis to support the lawful and orderly manner in which the universe operates. The regular operation of law is essential to the development of scientific truth. The religious counterpart to natural law is the principle of continuity. By contrast, the doctrine of the complete transcendence of God requires miracle as the only means by which God can confront men directly. The Deist, of course, emphasized the transcendence of God to show that the universe operates completely by natural law. The usual illustration of this principle is the analogy of a watchmaker. God is the perfect watchmaker whose handiwork never needs attention again. Liberal theologians accepted the theory of natural law, but they could not accept the religious principle of the Deists. By emphasizing the immanence of God, they have taught the doctrine of the eternal presence of God in His creation and have opened the way to the doctrine of the eternal creativity of God. However, this doctrine leads in the direction of pantheism, and, in order to avoid this conclusion, the liberals have accepted the doctrine of the transcendant-immanent God. The emphasis is on the immanence of God.

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[4] Oscar F. Green, "The Mark of a Liberal," Religion in Life, XXI (Winter, 1951-1952), 115: "Religiously we can have no peace until we realize that reason is the final guide of life."

Philosophical Basis of Liberalism

The scientific doctrine of evolution has had a profound effect on theology. At first, it seemed that if evolution could be proved, it would destroy religion at its roots. However, it was soon discovered that a philosophy of religion could be constructed upon its premises. Evolution was found to be compatible with the doctrine of the immanence of God, and it was further recognized as a description of the process of God's creativity. By analogy, it was seen also to be descriptive of the process by which the spiritual purposes of God are achieved in the world. Philosophical evolution, then, has become the basis for important areas of liberal theology.

In addition to being influenced by the philosophy of evolution, most liberals have based their thinking on one or more of the other available philosophic systems such as Platonism, neo-Platonism, Pragmatism, or Personalism. There is no particular philosophic system required by liberalism;

however,

> modern religious liberalism tends to prefer what may be designated as predominantly "Greek" (i.e., rational-philosophical) rather than "Hebrew" (i.e., personal-existential) forms of thought and expression.[5]

Characteristics of Liberalism

A fruitful suggestion has been made by Dr. Henry E. Kolbe who has said that the term "liberal" should be used as an adjective rather than as a substantive. Thus one would be referred to as a liberal man rather than as a liberal.[6] Dr. Kolbe has also said that in its basic meaning, religious liberalism

> is a spirit characterized by open-mindedness toward truth and by a non-dogmatic attitude which refuses to close accounts prematurely.[7]

Liberalism is also a spirit which manifests itself in generosity toward others and which is tolerant of conflicting opinions. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the liberal spirit is more descriptive of the liberal man than it is of liberalism.

The content of liberalism has come to have certain characteristic emphases. In relation to man, these emphases include: (1) the natural goodness of man, (2) man's need of

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5. Henry E. Kolbe, op. cit., p. 560.

6. Ibid., p. 564.

7. Ibid., p. 557.

religious growth through proper training and environment, (3) the need for social action based on moral and spiritual principles, and (4) the hope of a better world for man to be achieved through progress resulting from a definite program of action. In relation to God, these emphases include: (1) the faith that God acts through natural laws that are immutable, (2) the acceptance of the fact that God does not subject Himself to man's demand for miracles, (3) the belief that God has made Himself known in many different ways to men in every age and in all geographical areas, and (4) the faith that all men are at least potentially God's children.

Characteristic of liberalism also is the method of inquiry used to arrive at a formulation of religious truth.[8] The method has been adapted from the scientific method and is based on religious and scientific empiricism. To know the truth became the passion of liberalism. No authority whatsoever was recognized which could not validate itself in reason, and no religious truth was acceptable which was not meaningful to experience. It has been observed that there has been a shifting of religious authority from the Church to the Bible, which was accomplished by the Reformation, and a shifting of authority from the Bible to the individual, which has been accomplished by liberalism.[9]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Clinton M. Cherry, "The New Testament and a Changing Liberalism," Religion in Life, XIV (Winter, 1944-45), 15.

The substitution of a method of inquiry for the authority of the scriptures posed a new problem: the relation between belief and doubt. Any process of learning has to begin with something. This was proved by Descartes in his famous experiment in doubting. Where was the liberal to begin? In reality liberalism has always begun with an accepted body of religious truth which has meaning for him in his experience, and to this body of truth he has applied his method of inquiry. This has resulted in what has been called the dilemma of the liberal. He could not accept dogmatically the body of religious truth which he had received and which had meaning for him. Neither could he become a skeptic and doubt it all.[10] The dilemma is not real, however, for, as has been pointed out by William A. Christian, the liberal believes and questions. He does so as a scientist who accepts the proposition that there is unity in nature. The liberal commits himself to "what is most important in the universe."[11]

For most liberals the symbol of the most important value in the universe has continued to be the historical Jesus. Liberals of the nineteenth century spent a tremendous amount of effort in the "quest of the historical Jesus." The theological interests of the Bible were believed to have obscured his image. The ecumenical creeds of Christendom were renounced because they were believed to hide the real Jesus behind a screen of philosophical and theological terms inaccessible to the modern mind. There has been a persistent faith that if the genuinely human Jesus could be found and presented to the world, he would win the world by the matchless example of his life, based on his love of God and man. Because of the world-view of liberalism, the metaphysical relations of Jesus were denied. The Johanine doctrine of the pre-existence of the Son and the virgin birth described in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke were either denied or relegated to the limbo of unimportance. Jesus himself was religiously important because he was the supreme example of the simple ethical-religious life in the prophetic tradition. His divinity was the divinity of all men. It did not derive from any metaphysical relation with God, but from his perfect obedience and the unreserved commitment of his life to the will of God. Jesus, the pioneer, opened the way by his precept and example for divinity by all men who followed his example and lived by his precepts. This emphasis upon the historic Jesus and his significance has become characteristic of liberalism.

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[10] William E. Christian, "Belief, Inquiry, and the Dilemma of the Liberal," The Journal of Religion, XXI (April, 1951), 79.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 86-89.

This liberal view of Jesus radically altered the orientation of the Christian message. Salvation, which had been based on the initiative and action of God, now became dependent on man's ability to respond to the appeal of the example of

Jesus as being the right way to live and on his ability to follow the example. The dignity and worth of the individual as inherently good and potentially divine came to be central in liberalism. It was, of course, recognized that man did not fulfill his potentiality and that he did not always show evidence of his inherent goodness. These failures were seen to be the results of man's relation with society. The relatively new science of sociology was eagerly studied for what it had to teach concerning the relation of man to his environment. It was recognized that man is often a helpless victim of his society, and this pointed to the need of Christianizing society. Thus it came about that a religious movement which placed great stress on the individual, his dignity and worth, turned its interest to society. Liberalism as a movement is characterized by its emphasis upon social action. A genuine faith in progress through social action prevailed. It would be incorrect to say that liberals believed blindly in inevitable progress, because they actually believed that man would have to work for whatever progress he achieved. Yet, they believed profoundly in the possibility of progress -- even the probability of progress. Optimism was the dominant mood.

Salvation was changed in its conception, and locus of interest in salvation was changed from a primary interest in the "other world" to "this world." As a result, eschatology was recast and de-emphasized.

Through this discussion of the characteristics of liberalism, it is evident that the traditional or orthodox doctrines of most American churches were either denied or radically changed in content by re-interpretation. As has been indicated in the discussion, liberalism has brought about a re-orientation of religious thought. These transformations have not been made in an iconoclastic spirit. The purpose has been to preserve the Christian faith and to make it meaningful to the modern generation. Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen listed "loyalty to the historic faith" as one of the characteristics of evangelical liberalism, and quoted Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdic's phrase, "Abiding experiences in changing categories."[12]

Opposition to Liberalism

All of these changes have not been made without opposition. Fundamentalism arose out of orthodoxy as a challenge to a growing liberalism, but it was unsuccessful. Liberalism captured the seminaries and the universities, and from these citadels it sent Christian workers into the pulpits, the places of leadership in the organizational life of the church, and to the mission fields. Many people who would not classify themselves as liberals have had their religious thinking changed by the triumph of liberalism.

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12. Henry P. Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 347.

A new opposition to liberalism has arisen, largely from within liberalism itself. This opposition has taken form in two groups. The first is a group that has remained within liberalism, but with a keen awareness of what they believe to be the failures of liberalism. This group is self-styled "chastened liberalism." The second group has swung much further to the right and has been named "neo-orthodox."

The Self-Criticism of Liberalism

The self-criticism of liberalism has been brought about by the Kierkegaardian revival, the impact of Barthianism, and vast changes in society brought about by revolutionary political concepts, depression and war. The first world war did not destroy the optimism of American liberals. The period of America's participation was relatively of short duration, it was fought on European soil, and its idealism was more real to Americans than the magnitude of its destructive force. Its idealism was expressed in such slogans as "Make the world safe for democracy," and "A war to end wars." For many Europeans optimism was dead, but it was a little more than another decade before the forces of evil beyond man's control began to make itself felt in the American theological mind. The great depression, the gathering clouds of a second world war, the second world war, the cold war, and Korea have rained successive blows on man's self-confidence. Liberalism has been attacked in its vital point: the doctrine of man. Articles re-thinking and redefining liberalism have appeared from time to time in the last quarter of a century. Younger scholars have repudiated many of the earlier liberal conclusions, and have begun a new orientation of religious thinking, taking into serious account the theologies of Paul, Augustine, and the Reformers. Insights long by-passed as ridiculous or insignificant are being re-examined. Liberalism is again making its adjustments to the demands of the times. The newer liberals have taken the older liberalism for a beginning point, just as the older liberals took Christian orthodoxy for a point of beginning. Neo-liberalism has been guided by the same spirit of openness to truth whatever its sources. It has been guided by the same purpose: to make Christianity meaningful to the modern mind. It has not exhibited the same complete reliance on reason. It has not abandoned its faith in the goodness of man, though his goodness is seen as corrupted, and it has not abandoned its opposition to the supernatural.

Some liberals have adopted the term "realism," which "implies that they have abandoned their idealistic philosophy."[13] These newer liberals have also changed the form of the philosophy of evolution in keeping with newer scientific attitudes. The appropriate term now in use is "emergent evolution."

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[13] William Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 111: Liberals referred to in the text were Walter Marshall Horton, John C. Bennett, and Henry P. Van Dusen.

Changes in Liberalism

These changes have naturally resulted in changes in the content of liberalism. Many of these significant changes are reflected in a book published in honor of Eugene William Lyman entitled Liberal Theology, An Appraisal.

John C. Bennett, one of the contributors to the book, has recognized the failure of the liberal concept of man with its concomitant optimism. The focal point of this recognition was his realization of the unthinkable enormity of sin and evil in the world. He found that man has been unable to cope with the magnitude of the evil by which he has been confronted. Because of man's predicament, he stands always in need of God's judgment, love, mercy, and grace. Dr. Bennett has not abandoned liberalism, but he has called into question some of his own earlier conclusions, and he has adopted what he believes is a more realistic point of view.[14]

A significant new interest has captivated the attention of most liberals today. They have become dedicated to the establishment and enlargement of the ecumenical church.[15] This interest, a part of the "new look" of liberalism, has brought about a re-thinking of the significance and meaning of the church on the part of many who formerly regarded it as a hindrance to the kingdom of God.

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[14] John C. Bennett, "The Christian Concept of Man," Chapter XII, David E. Roberts and Henry P. Van Dusen, eds., Liberal Theology, An Appraisal, Essays in Honor of Eugene Wm. Lyman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942).

The doctrine of Redemption is also undergoing revision. Liberalism has tended to identify the work of redemption with the evolutionary process by which the world moved to an end in accordance with the purpose of God. This process in which man had a part was not believed to be inevitable. It was believed also that the process depended on the constant creative activity of God. Thus, the creative and redemptive processes are not distinct divine activities, but, rather, are descriptive terms of the same work of God. In this process, it was believed that God worked according to immutable laws. Yet, within the process there was one variable: human freedom. This made it necessary for man to yield himself to God's purpose and become a co-worker with Him. The end of the process was to be the kingdom of God, which was already partially realized, and which will be completely realized when mankind becomes totally obedient to God's will. The "this-worldly" emphasis of liberalism made the earth the locus of the fulfillment of the Kingdom. The liberal concept of redemption has not ignored the Eternal, as may be supposed from this description of the redemptive process. Daniel D. Williams has emphasized this point.

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[15] William Adams Brown, "The Church," Chapter XVI, David E. Roberts and Henry P. Van Dusen, eds., op. cit.

> It is true that there was a shift of attention here from the redemption as meaning primarily a fulfilment in a future life to redemption as the realization of the good in this life. Yet the liberal theology did not ignore the eternal for the sake of the temporal. It rather conceived of the eternal love of God as becoming disclosed within the temporal realm.[16]

The liberal doctrine of redemption has been subject to severe attack on the basis that it has made the natural processes of the world and human experience and action the vehicles of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. To call into question the possibility that the Kingdom shall come through these processes is to call into question the Christian hope of a better world. It is difficult to see signs that man has made progress in the reformation of his own nature, which has given repeated demonstrations of a remarkable capacity for evil. These demonstrations have been very convincing. Dr. Williams has suggested a formula by which he is able to preserve man's hope of progress under God's providence and at the same time open the way to a more comprehensive concept of redemption.

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16. Daniel D. Williams, "The Perplexity and the Opportunity of the Liberal Theology in America," The Journal of Religion, XXV (July, 1945), 170.

> I wish to suggest the following formula for the reconstruction of the doctrine of redemption: The divine work of redemption to which Christianity bears witness cannot be identified with the perfecting of this world and our human life -- so far the liberal doctrine will not hold; but the work of redemption includes as an _integral aspect_ whatever perfecting of this world and human life is possible -- so far liberalism is right.[17]

Dr. Williams has recognized the importance of the liberal contribution to the concept of salvation as meaningful to people in securing deliverance from the ills of this world here and now. This salvation has been well described by Dr. Charles S. Braden.[18] Yet, the stress of the times has been so great that men have started to search beyond this world for a fuller meaning of salvation. Many liberals have joined the search.

Dr. Henry P. Van Dusen has struggled with the problem of finding an explanation of the historic Christian faith that,

> _In Jesus of Nazareth God himself was present, as fully as it is possible for him to be present in a truly human life._[19]

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[17] _Ibid._, p. 175.

[18] Charles S. Braden, "How Liberal Christianity Conceives of Salvation," _The Journal of Religion_, XVII (January, 1937), 12-29.

[19] Henry Pitney Van Dusen, "The Significance of Jesus Christ," Chapter XIII, David E. Roberts and Henry P. Van Dusen, eds., _op. cit._, p. 217.

He has contended that the classic terms of the Ecumenical creeds used to describe the person of Jesus Christ and his relationship with God ought to be discarded as unsuitable vehicles to convey meaning to the modern mind.

> Jesus Christ should be described, whether in his relation to God or to man, not in such terms as "essence," "substance," "infinity," "immutability," "impassibility," but always in words descriptive of personal life such as "thought," "will," "purpose," "self," "spirit," "goodness," "love." This principle is to be insisted upon not as a concession to simplification. Rather it is dictated by the fact that the reality with which we have to deal is, in every aspect, intrinsically and richly personal -- as a human person living a normal and normative experience as a powerful influence in history; as a living presence today.[20]

Here, Dr. Van Dusen truly reflects the liberal school, though his statement describing the divinity of Christ goes beyond that of many of his fellow liberals. Liberalism, insofar as it is "Greek" and not "Hebrew" cannot accept the metaphysical aspect of the Incarnation. Dr. Van Dusen described the incarnation in these words: "The identity of Jesus with God was of outlook, of purpose, of will, of compassion."[21] Modern terms for modern minds is a good method, as long as modern terms say what should be said. The interpretation of the significance of Jesus Christ given by Dr. Van Dusen is helpful

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20. Ibid., p. 214.

21. Ibid., p. 217.

and contains many fine insights, but he has not based his interpretation on the clear intention of the ecumenical creeds to state, "We believe in . . . Jesus Christ . . . ; Being of one substance with the Father."[22]

In an article calling on liberalism to plumb the depths of historic Christianity, George W. Davis emphasized the inadequacy of regarding Jesus simply as a good man who set a good example. Liberals need to discover the "roots out of which the book, the church, the history, the doctrine, and the distinctive life of Jesus came."[23] Dr. Davis said of Jesus:

> Many other men have lived good lives and suffered likewise. To say that and no more about Jesus is to remain on the surface level of thinking about him. Nor is it sufficient to observe that Jesus was a good man voluntarily sacrificing himself for others. That too could be said concerning many more. For Christian depth we must rather go still deeper, asserting that Jesus was God's Son who died that the redemptive love of the Father might be let loose in the world.[24]

The Effect of Liberalism on Christian Missions

Insofar as liberalism has provided a theological basis for American Christianity its conclusions have entered into the theological basis of the American contribution to Christian missions. The foregoing brief summary of liberalism has been given in order to provide a basis for drawing conclusions concerning the effect of liberalism on Christian missions. The more radical types of liberalism which have moved into humanism and unitarianism have no place at all for a Christian mission which purposes to win converts from other faiths to Christianity and which seeks to establish Christian churches outside of "Christendom." The influence of these radical groups has been felt by more moderate liberals. The principle type of liberalism whose exponents have concerned themselves with the missionary enterprise is "evangelical liberalism."

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[22] Nicene Creed.

[23] George W. Davis, "Liberalism and a Theology of Depth," The Crozer Quarterly, XXVIII (July, 1951), 194.

[24] Ibid., pp. 206-207.

Liberal Christianity has affected the Christian missionary enterprise at three vital points: (1) the concept of the uniqueness of Christianity, (2) the attitude toward non-Christian religions, and (3) the motive for Christian missions.

The Uniqueness of Christianity

The uniqueness of Christianity is dependent upon a doctrine of revelation which asserts that God made Himself known through Christian channels in a more complete way than He has through any other means whatsoever. Christian channels have included the person of Jesus Christ, his apostles, the Church, the Bible, and individual experience. By its religious empiricism, liberalism has made experience central as the means of validating religious truth. Reason has been accepted as the norm of evaluating experience and as the judge of all claims to truth. The epistemology accepted by the individual supplies the rational basis of judgment. The religious liberal does not accept external authority as a basis for accepting as religious truth anything which cannot be validated by reason. Thus the historic channels of final truth cannot be accepted as final authority. The Bible and the Church cannot validate truth taught by experience, because they have no greater access to truth than is accessible to human intuition and genius.

Because of its reliance upon reason, liberalism has appealed primarily to the intellectual class. The approach to problems of vital concern to human existence has been made on an academic plane. Religious certainty has been made dependent ultimately upon man and not upon God.

The real failure of liberalism, so far as its discovery of an adequate basis for the uniqueness of Christianity is concerned, is its inability to establish a true metaphysical basis for religion. The uniqueness of Christianity cannot be established when primary emphasis is placed on the immanence-continuity pattern of explanation.

The failure to establish the uniqueness of Christianity has not been disastrous for people in Christian lands. If they have an inclination to be religious, they become

Christians. No other religion is in a position to make a serious claim upon them. (Judaism, of course, is present, but makes no serious effort to make proselytes.)

The situation is radically different for the missionary. He preaches the gospel usually in a land where the dominant religion is not Christianity, and where the rational thought patterns are not based on western philosophy. On what basis can he urge the non-Christian to become a disciple? Would he not serve the religious life of mankind better if he would simply urge him to become a more devout follower of his own faith? This would seem to be the logical conclusion unless the missionary is convinced that Christianity is uniquely true, that any other basis for salvation falls short of what God's love for man has provided, and that any other understanding of God than that made possible through faith in Jesus Christ fails to measure up to the revelation that God has made of Himself.

Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions

A second vital point at which liberalism has affected Christian missions is in its attitude toward non-Christian religions. The denial of an absolute or final revelation puts all religions within the natural process of development, though it does not assume that all religions are of equal value. Many liberals assert the superiority of Jesus Christ over all other men and any other founder of a religion. Many also assert the superiority of certain moral values for society that have developed within Christendom. However, the liberal position that truth is where you find it and that God has made Himself known in every age and among all peoples has led to an open-mindedness toward other religions. The assumption has often been held that the religious intuition of man, expressed in many different forms, is essentially the same in whatever form it is expressed. The liberal has studied non-Christian religions to see what truths they contained, not to see wherein they are false. This positive attitude toward other religions has opened the way for cooperative activity among the religions of the world in attempting to secure for mankind such moral and social values as are commonly held to be sacred.

There are two criticisms of the liberal attitude toward non-Christian religions from the viewpoint of a theology of missions. First, the liberal approach seems to be based on academic interest more than on the existential need of man to find his right relationship with God. Second, the liberal attitude tends to the formulation of an aim for Christian missions that is inconsistent with the establishment of a community of believers. An example of this aim is found in the Laymen's Inquiry.

> In more literal phrasing, the aim of Christian missions today in our conception would take this form: To seek with people of other lands a true knowledge and love of God, expressing in life and word what we have learned through Jesus Christ, and endeavoring to give effect to his spirit in the life of the world.[25]

The need for Christian witness is expressed in this statement of aim, but the witness does not lead to Christian fellowship. The Christian missionary becomes a fellow-seeker after truth with representatives of non-Christian religions in a kind of world seminar on religion. While this approach cannot be said to be characteristic of liberalism, it is certainly logically consistent with its attitude toward other religions. Though the type of activity required by this statement of aim is within the province of the missionary, its aim is not conducive to the establishment of a world-wide Christian church. This observation leads to a consideration of liberalism's missionary motive.

Missionary Motive

Liberalism has taken the harshness out of the motive expressed in earlier phases of modern Protestant missions. In those days people in heathen darkness were pictured as going to hell for the want of the light of the Gospel. A Christian, it was believed, must carry the gospel to the heathen to give them the opportunity to be saved from hell. This motive is still prevalent among many fundamentalist groups. Liberalism has been more jealous of the justice and love of God, and more humanitarian in its approach.

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[25] Re-thinking Missions, A Layman's Inquiry After One Hundred Years, p. 326.

Because of its intense interest in the individual, liberalism has tended to consider that the proper approach to the non-Christian should be placed on a person to person basis. Because of its interest ~~in~~ social welfare, liberalism has tended to emphasize the penetration of non-Christian societies with enlightened Christian ideals that will result in the elimination of inhuman practices prevalent in non-Christian societies, as practices of like nature have been and are being eliminated in Christian societies. This is not to imply that only liberals have been interested in social welfare, or that liberals are only interested in social welfare. Liberalism has tended to appeal for missionaries and missionary support on the humanitarian basis of the needs of people for social welfare services. This practice was prevalent, however, in earlier missionary appeal based on the then unshaken faith in the superiority of western civilization.

The net results of liberalism has been to take away the motive to missions based on an authoritarian or legalistic interpretation of the Great Commission and based on the interpretation that Christianity presents absolute truth in the unique Son of God who is the only means of salvation for all men wherever they are. It has not been able to replace these beliefs with others which would provide equally compelling motives for missions. Its concern, however, has not been to preserve the missionary enterprise, but to find the truth about the Christian faith and to face it honestly. With this purpose no one can quarrel, though there are many opponents to the findings of liberalism.

Liberalism and Eschatology

In addition to these three areas where liberalism has affected Christian missions, one other observation needs to be made. Liberalism has no adequate philosophy of history and therefore no adequate eschatology. The older liberal emphasis on the gradual coming of the kingdom of God through the permeation of society with Christian ideals was consistent with philosophic evolution on which it was based. It could point to many accomplishments such as the abolition of slavery, the elevation of the position of women, and governmental concern with individual welfare. Yet, the evil forces at work in the world, which have found other means of enslaving people, and which have made men of good will helpless in the face of the destructive forces of depression and war, have forced liberalism to abandon utopianism in any form, political or religious. The Christian hope expressed in terms of biblical eschatology is still unacceptable to liberalism, and no alternate means of expressing the ultimate Christian hope has been found.

Contributions of Liberalism to Christian Missionary Thought

Liberalism has enriched the missionary message in several ways.

First, it has given the missionary a new understanding and appreciation for the historical Jesus. The missionary need no longer present Jesus Christ as an almost impersonal means of salvation, because he now has a living, holy, and compassionate person, Jesus of Nazareth, who is in a very meaningful way a personal saviour. He is a person to be known and loved and who excites a passion to service for his sake.

Second, liberalism has given the missionary a positive ethic with an emphasis on doing good. Liberalism, by its tendency toward humanism, has introduced the humanitarian emphasis in the concept of Christian righteousness. This emphasis has been authenticated by the principle taught by Jesus that human welfare is of greater importance than the letter of the law.

Third, the liberal attack on religious legalism has opened the way to a more truly spiritual faith, based on the experience of the spirit of Jesus. This contribution has given the missionary more latitude for accomodation to the needs of the mission field.

Fourth, liberalism has enlarged the missionary's concept of brotherhood by denying that God is the Father only of Christians and by emphasizing the Pauline concept that God

> hath made of one blood all nations of men for
> to dwell on all the face of the earth.[26]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be observed that liberal theologians have not been directly interested in missions. At least, they have not written extensively on the subject. Illustrative of this fact is the lack of interest shown in missions by Religion in Life in its first ten years of publication. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., made an evaluation of this publication under the title, "A Decade of Trends in 'Religion in Life'," [27] in which he pointed out that the quarterly is a liberal publication and therefore reflects the strength and weaknesses of liberalism. Concerning the neglect of missions, he said:

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[26] Acts 17:26.

[27] Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., "A Decade of Trends in 'Religion in Life'," Religion in Life, XI (Winter, 1941-1942), 125-137.

> In contrast to the interest in the ecumenical church is the neglect of missions. Only a single article deals with the portentious meeting at Madras of the older and younger churches which marked a turning point in the foreign missionary enterprise of American churches. The quarterly is almost completely silent about the great ethnic faiths: Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, etc. The major focus of the journal is the Christian religion. It lives and moves and has its being in Christianity.[28]

While liberal theologians have not interested themselves in missions as such, they have given much thought to subjects which are important elements in the theological basis for Christian missions. Liberal theologians have called into question any conclusion which seemed to them to be inconsistent with reason, science, and human welfare. They have showed a willingness to alter their previously stated positions, when honestly and openness to truth have demanded change. They have thereby challenged those who are especially interested in the missionary enterprise to the same searching process through which the liberals are now passing.

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[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

CHAPTER XII

FUNDAMENTALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

One of the great religious battles of America was waged between fundamentalism and a variety of opponents. The heat of the conflict reached its greatest intensity in the period between 1918 and 1931. A description and analysis of the religious and political issues involved and the campaigns waged have been given by Norman F. Furniss in his book The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931.[1] The controversy was carried on by interdenominational groups and within the denominations by opposing factions. The most effective denominational group was The World's Christian Fundamentals Association, which had its beginning in the meeting of a small group of ministers in Montrose, Pennsylvania, in 1916, which reached the conclusion that " . . . the time has come for a correlation of orthodox conservative forces yet found in the churches . . . .[2] The Association grew into a powerful national organization with the avowed purpose of rooting modernism out of the religious life of America and preventing the teaching of biological evolution in tax-supported schools. The most famous leader in the Association was William Jennings Bryan, who was also active in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The energies of the Association were largely directed toward the enactment of anti-evolution laws, and their efforts were partially successful. As soon, however, as opposition to these laws began to crystalize in an awareness of their threat to a free development of natural sciences, they could no longer be passed in state legislatures. This failure on the political front destroyed the effectiveness of the Association as a fundamentalist organization. The year 1927 "proved to be the high-water mark of the organization; after this its power and energy precipitously ebbed."[3]

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[1] Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

[2] Ibid., p. 49. Quoted from Sunday School Times, 62 (1920), 391.

There were, of course, several other organizations dedicated to the cause of fundamentalism, but none of them was able to sustain prolonged effective action.

The more definitely religious aspect of the controversy centered in the churches. Here the efforts of the fundamentalists were directed toward controlling ecclesiastical positions of influence such as offices, membership on boards, and denominational educational institutions. The full story can only be told by a history of the controversy in each denomination.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Mission boards, along with other ecclesiastical agencies and institutions, were affected. As has been pointed out, the mission boards and societies of the major denominations rejected the theological presuppositions of Re-thinking Missions. Judged by this standard they could not have been radically liberal.[4] Nonetheless, the mission boards and missionary personnel were called upon by the fundamentalists to give an account of their orthodoxy.[5] In some cases independent boards were organized by fundamentalists.[6]

Within the churches, the issues between fundamentalism and liberalism were not always clearly drawn. Often times matters of strictly denominational concern were involved. In the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., loyalty to the Westminster Confession was a primary concern of some conservatives.[7] In the Northern Baptist Church and in the Disciples of Christ the conflict was sometimes centered in the conservative opposition to open membership.[8]

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[4] Re-thinking Missions was published after the drive of the fundamentalists for control of their denominations had been spent.

[5] Cf. Stewart G. Cole, The History of Fundamentalism (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), pp. 71f., 79f., 101f., 116f., 143f., 150. Cf. Furniss, op. cit., p. 116.

[6] Furniss, op. cit., p. 117 and p. 141.

[7] The conservative opposition to the union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was voiced again in the proposed union of twenty-three evangelical denominations. Cf. Furniss, op. cit., p. 130.

[8] Cole, op. cit., pp. 73f., 83f., 133, 136-137.

The Tenets of Fundamentalism

The publication of a set of ten small pamphlets entitled The Fundamentals was begun in 1910. Of this publication Dr. Furniss has said:

> In addition to several articles on regeneration, sin, and other tenets, the series expatiated on the "Five Points" that were to become the sine qua non of fundamentalism: the infallibility of the Bible, Christ's Virgin Birth, his substutionary Atonement, Resurrection, and Second Coming.[9]

Characteristics of the Fundamentalists

Dr. Furniss has discussed five characteristics of fundamentalism. These are: (1) longing for certainty, (2) violence of thought and language, (3) ignorance, (4) egotism, and (5) concern for children.[10] He did not imply that all fundamentalists of this period were ignorant, but stated that such scholars as J. Gresham Machen were the exception rather than the rule of the movement.[11] The egotism which characterized fundamentalists was grounded in the need of "drab people" for distinction.[12]

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[9] Furniss, op. cit., p. 13. The fifth point of the Presbyterian, U.S.A., deliverance of 1910 was Christ's performance of miracles. Cf. p. 130, fn. 7.

[10] Ibid., chapter three, pp. 35-48.

[11] Ibid., p. 35.

[12] Ibid., p. 43.

William Hordern has given a more appreciative analysis of fundamentalism.[13] He has said that it "can be understood as a threatened movement, a movement which has to tighten its lines for defence."[14] This may seem a strange statement when the fundamentalists were, during the period of the great controversy, very sure that they represented the majority of American Christians. They felt, nevertheless, that they were on the defensive both personally and as representatives of true Christianity. They have always been sensitive to such characterizations as have been made by Dr. Furniss and many others. They have been especially sensitive to allegations that they constitute an irrational movement. J. Gresham Machen defended fundamentalism against this accusation by the counter charge that "the great weakness of liberalism was its irrationalism and anti-intellectualism."[15] Dr. Machen also answered charges that fundamentalists "were narrow-minded opponents of free speech."[16]

> On questions of free speech, Machen argues that he has no desire that the liberal should not be free to hold and to spread his opinions . . . . He may think the creeds wrong or he may

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[13] William Hordern, A Laymen's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), Chapter Three, pp. 56-76.

[14] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[15] Ibid., p. 68.

[16] Ibid., p. 71.

> think that it is wrong to have any kind of creed. . . . How can he honestly ask that a Church support him while he undermines the doctrines on which the Church is built?[17]

For more than two decades there has been an armed truce between fundamentalism and its opponents. There have been, of course, spasmodic outbreaks of the controversy in several denominations but, on the whole, each side has become reconciled to co-existence. In a real sense, new issues have by-passed the controversy, and both sides have had to re-think their positions.

Re-vitalized Fundamentalism

One might have expected fundamentalism to avoid re-thinking its position, since it has chosen to take its stand on the "Five Points," but such has not been the case. Fundamentalism is developing a group of scholars and theologians who are taking their positions with a keen awareness of the issues involved.

Social Ethics

One of the criticisms that has been leveled against fundamentalism is that it has been unconcerned with social ethics. Carl F. H. Henry has faced this issue with commendable forthrightness in his book, The Uneasy Conscience of

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[17] Ibid., p. 72.

Modern Fundamentalism.[18] Dr. Henry has admitted the failure of fundamentalism at this point, and has added that "Fundamentalist churches increasingly have repudiated the very movements whose most energetic efforts have gone into an attack on such social ills."[19] The movement has been characterized by "doctrinal fidelity" rather than "social responsibility."[20] The failure, however, is not the result of a defect in the genius of fundamentalism. The conviction of fundamentalism that Christianity is a religion of redemptions provides the basis of its approach to social problems. According to Dr. Henry, "the methodology of Jesus is a redemption methodology," and modern formulas have been in error when they have presupposed "that redemption is an alien concept for the contemporary world."[21] The missionary motive and the sense of world ethical responsibility are equally grounded in redemption, and both are a part of the Christian challenge to paganism.[22] Without "the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit" Christianity has no power to oppose the evils of the world.[23]

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[18] Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdman's Publishing Company, 1947). It should be noted here that Dr. Henry's emphasis upon social ethics is not characteristic of fundamentalism.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 17. Dr. Henry's reference was to the World Council of Churches and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 19. Orthodox Reformed groups have been particularly aware of this "ethical responsibility."

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

The problem of Christian missions, in the view of fundamentalism, is not the "remaking [of] the modern mind in such a way that the future world culture can be identified fully as a Christian civilization."[24] This view is not based on a pessimistic view of man, because fundamentalism holds that man "is not a sinner by a necessity of his original nature, but rather by voluntary choice."[25] Social progress is, therefore, possible for sinful man when he accepts the redemptive work of Christ and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit.[26] The missionary task is not to be defined in terms of home and foreign missions, but in the "apostolic task of seeking to transform an environment that is quite unilaterally hostile."[27] As a result of the fulfillment of the apostolic mission, "even the unregenerate are moved by Christian standards," and "are more easily reached for Christ than those who have made a deliberate break with Christian standards."[28] The missionary principle involved in this approach has been expressed in these words: "To the extent that any society is leavened with Christian conviction, it becomes a more hospitable environment for Christian expansion."[29]

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[22] Ibid., pp. 42-44.

[23] Ibid., p. 45.

[24] Ibid., p. 68.

[25] Ibid., p. 69.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 71.

The missionary obligation is not canceled for the fundamentalists by a "conviction of foredoomed failure."[30] The world evangelistic program is based on three convictions: (1) an assault on global ills must be made within the context of redemption; (2) Christianity is totally opposed to all moral evils, "whether societal or personal"; and (3) with the Christian ethical standard Christ is offered as "a dynamic to lift humanity to its highest level."[31]

The real problem which confronts fundamentalism is the need for a means of cooperative endeavor with non-evangelical forces that have borne the brunt of social action. An intense concentration on preserving the validity of the faith through loyalty to the fundamental doctrines has made spiritual isolationists of fundamentalists groups. Cooperation has appeared to them as compromise. The formula of action proposed by Dr. Henry has two parts:

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

> (1) When evangelicals are in the majority, to couple such condemnation of evils with the redemptive Christian message as the only true solution; (2) when evangelicals are in the minority, to express their opposition to evils in a "formula of protest," concurring heartily in the assault on social wrongs.[32]

This recognition of need for cooperative action in redressing social evils, when applied to world problems, should lead to a concern for social ethics on the mission fields. This concern should result not only in protest, but in positive approaches to problems posed by cultural differences.

The beginning has been made. This does not imply that fundamentalists have not been interested in social problems.[33] The need for interchange of ideas in Christian ethics by those representing opposed theological perspectives is great, and such an interchange should lead to a positive Christian approach to world social problems.

The Rational Approach

Another evidence of revitalized fundamentalism is the willingness of some of its representatives to claim to base the Christian faith on reason. In doing so, revelation is not denied, but fitted into a larger pattern than can be explained empirically. In fact, the real difference between fundamentalists and their opponents is found in two opposing world-views. One world-view is found in the Bible, and is accepted by fundamentalism. The other world-view has been developed by the modern world and is the foundation of the sciences. These two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they do contain areas of important contradiction. The possibility of miracles is a question which brings the two world-views into contradiction.

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[33] The approach has appeared to be negative and primarily aimed at the individual in society. There has also been a political approach aimed at enactment of prohibitory measures.

Edward John Carnell has written a Christian apology in which he has accepted the Biblical world-view, but has faced the challenge of the scientific world-view.[34] The following quotation is characteristic of his approach:

> In deciding between these two philosophic approaches, Biblical and scientific world-views concerning miracles, let us covenant to accept the one which, when viewed from all directions, is attended by the fewest difficulties.[35]

Without making judgment concerning how well Dr. Carnell has defended his position, it can be said that on the basis of his presuppositions he has used reason to develop his position.[36] He has also defended his presuppositions and method over against naturalism and the scientific method.[37] One of the interesting facts in the light of the history of fundamentalism is Dr. Carnell's discussion of evolution. He has approached the subject of evolution with an apparent openness to scientific truth and has accepted a theory which he has called "'threshold' evolution."[38]

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[34] Edward John Carnell, An Introduction to Christian Apologetics: A Philosophic Defense of the Trinitarian-Theistic Faith (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdman's Publishing Co., 1948), p. 379.

[35] Ibid., p. 243.

[36] The book is projected on the level of college seniors, and therefore its findings would be difficult to

Critical Evaluation

Another evidence of revitalized fundamentalism is the ability which some of its representatives are showing to evaluate critically the philosophical and theological issues in contemporary thought.

In The New Modernism, Cornelius Van Til has presented a critical evaluation of the theology of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.[39] In this work he has sought to show that the theology which grew out of a desire to overcome modern relativism and subjectivism in religion has fallen victim to the same evils because it is built on the same critical philosophy

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judge from a philosophic point of view. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8: "Seasoned philosophers will be disappointed by our efforts, for we have here elected to appeal to college seniors."

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-273.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 239-242.

[39] Cornelius Van Til, *The New Modernism: An Appraisal of the Theology of Barth and Brunner* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1947).

of Immanuel Kant. It has thus become the "new modernism," even more dangerous than the old. The break between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner is only a "civil war," not a battle between natural enemies, because Brunner has never broken with Barth's basic presuppositions.

In contradiction to the critical interpretation of individuation, Dr. Van Til has set the explanation of Calvinism. In Calvinism all facts and their interpretation existed in the mind of God before their phenominal existance. Dr. Van Til believes that this principle overcomes the chance philosophy of Hume, which is irrational and the determinism of Leibniz, which is pure rationality. Kant's solution to the problem is irrational, because the thing-in-itself can never be known except in terms of subjective form. Thus, any system of theology built on Kant's critical philosophy is basically irrational and subjective.

Edward J. Carnell has also shown the ability to face the issues of contemporary theology in his study of Reinhold Niebuhr.[40] In the "Preface," Dr. Carnell identified his own position as that of classical Reformation theology. His chief criticism of Dr. Niebuhr centers in the philosophy of history which requires all involvement in history to be under the condition of sin. This philosophy requires the teaching that the historical Jesus was involved in sin. Such a conclusion is little short of blasphemy to a person of orthodox or fundamentalistic faith, because it strikes at an essential element in the doctrine of redemption. The significance of the revitalization of fundamentalism can be seen at this point. Instead of consigning Dr. Niebuhr to the lower regions for his modernism, Dr. Carnell expressed real appreciation for his contribution to Christian thought. This openness to issues is present in modern fundamentalism.

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[40] Edward John Carnell, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1941).

The Doctrines of Fundamentalism

What do fundamentalists believe? The Five Points basic to fundamentalism at the time of the controversy remain as essentials of the fundamentalist faith. The present tendency, however, is to place these fundamentals in the larger context of a traditional body of beliefs such as a confession of faith, and for fundamentalists to refer to themselves as evangelicals or orthodox. As Carl F. H. Henry has observed, the unity of the various systems of fundamentalism is found in their common insistence on the Five Points against the liberals.[41] In the wider theological context of denominational belief, fundamentalists disagree among themselves, but these disagreements are usually of less significance to them than the five fundamentals.[42]

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[41] Carl F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma: An Analysis of the Current Impasse in Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 54-55, note # 39.

The three significant beliefs of fundamentalism are the inerrant Bible, salvation, and the second coming of Christ.[43]

Fundamentalism and the Bible

The most vital doctrine to the fundamentalist system is the inerrant Bible. This doctrine gives fundamentalism its basis for objectivity in religion, and makes the ultimate truth of any doctrine depend on Biblical affirmation. It is also the greatest assurance of the truth of the remaining four fundamentals.

In a discussion of revelation, Carl F. H. Henry has presented the basic doctrines of the Bible subscribed to by fundamentalists. His discussion is set in the framework of an examination of the positions of non-fundamentalists, particularly the views of Emil Brunner. A meeting of minds on the subject of revelation is impossible, according to Dr. Henry, because liberalism and neo-orthodoxy are based on evolutionary naturalism, which precludes the possibility of supernatural revelation.[44] In Dr. Henry's view, a genuine revelation that comes from God and does not represent human genius must be definable in supernatural terms.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] This is not to minimize the importance of the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the substitutionary Atonement, and the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are three emphases in the doctrine of salvation. As a result of contemporary emphasis on the sinfulness of man participating in historic existence, a fourth emphasis will probably be added: the sinlessness of Jesus.

Over against the contemporary insistence that the mighty acts of God are the basis of revelation, Dr. Henry has insisted that

> God's self-disclosure is in terms not only of events or saving acts, but also in terms of doctrine -- in other words, that He gives a propositional revelation of Himself . . . . Here divine revelation involves more than divine activity or events, but presses beyond the divine acts in history to a divine impartation of knowledge about God. Revelation is not merely dynamic, but is propositional, and consequently involves revealed truth. Out of this conviction grows evangelical insistence that the Scriptures are to be viewed as an organ of revelation.[45]

The propositional nature of revelation is based on the rationality of revelation. Revelation is not mystical, nor simply conceptual, but truth that can be stated rationally.[46]

The infallibility of the Bible can best be explained in terms of verbal inspiration, and the doctrine of infallibility should not be tied to "unnecessary dogmas about the mechanics of inspiration."[47] This view immediately presents difficulties, which Dr. Henry has recognized. Unnecessary wars have been waged in the past in the name of verbal inspiration against scientific views which modern fundamentalists "champion as involving no conflict at all with the Scriptures."[48] Recognition of the requirements of literary style has enabled many fundamentalists to interpret the Scripture with greater perception of its truth.[49]

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[44] Henry, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-48, p. 78.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 97. Cf. p. 101.

Many fundamentalists subscribe to Biblical infallibility only in the original autographs. The charge that this is simply a way to avoid difficult situations was met by Dr. Henry by a quotation from Westcott and Hort that the words subject to doubt amount to no more than a thousandth part of the New Testament.[50]

The doctrinal unity of the Bible is important to the fundamentalist's position. It is interesting to note that Dr. Henry has not excluded progressive revelation from the concept of the doctrinal unity of the Bible.[51] The doctrine of unity in the Bible is consistent with verbal inspiration and the propositional nature of revelation, and is necessary to a systematic Biblical theology.

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[47] Ibid., p. 77.

[48] Ibid., p. 65.

[49] Ibid., p. 63, fn. 49: "Not all fundamentalists by any means interpret the 'sun standing still' literally, in view of similar poetic passages in Joshua . . . ."

[50] Ibid., p. 73. Cf. Westcott and Hort, Greek New Testament, pp. 564f.

The concept of history is vital to a view of revelation. The following statement of Dr. Henry expresses the historical perspective of fundamentalism:

> Without the events, the doctrines are empty postulates; the sinfulness of man, the atonement, the bodily resurrection -- what are these notions, if God has not entered specifically into history, if there is no Calvary, no empty tomb?[52]

The event and its significance are equally a part of the revelation.[53] The Holy Spirit testifies that what the Scripture says is true, but the Holy Spirit does not reveal truth that is not in the Bible. A departure from this principle can only bring subjectivism and relativism into religion.[54]

All forms of higher criticism have been categorically rejected by fundamentalism. The doctrine of the inerrant Bible only allows for textual criticism, and, for those who believe in the infallibility of the original autographs, this type of study is very important.

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[51] Ibid., p. 75. He has not tied progress to time.

[52] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

[53] Ibid., p. 101.

[54] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

Salvation

Modern fundamentalism denies that man sins inevitably because he is human and affirms that "all men are implicated in a primal moral revolt against the Creator."[55] The image of God in which man was created has been distorted in sinful man, though not destroyed. Since God is holy and has been offended by man's sin, man must receive God's forgiveness, if he is to be saved from God's wrath. Dr. Henry has pointed out ". . . that God is merciful as well as holy is one of the focii of the Biblical ellipse; that in Jesus Christ He provides the sufficient atonement for the sins of men, is the other."[56]

The means whereby God saves man from sin has been set forth by Edward J. Carnell, who called Jesus Christ the "sin-bearer."[57] Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the second Adam, was sinless, and his perfection was substituted for man's sinfulness.[58] "In his vicarious and atoning death on the cross a payment for sin has been made," and the eternal justice has been satisfied.[59] On the cross, Jesus endured

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[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[57] Edward John Carnell, *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 323.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

[59] *Ibid.*

"the second death," which is the meaning of the descent into hell. Dr. Carnell has said:

> At the moment Christ endured the second death, the only person the Father could see on the cross was one full of sin -- sin which was not Christ's own, but of which nonetheless he had become the vicarious agent. The sword in the heart of the Son was the withdrawal of the Father's fellowship. In the instant when the guilt and transgressions of the world were transferred to his cross, the Son (as it were) beheld the tears in the eyes of the Father. There was guilt in the heavenly family.[60]

It was this vicarious suffering of the pangs of hell which made possible the salvation of all men.

The evangelistic (and the missionary) motive in Dr. Carnell's exposition of Christ as the means of salvation is to be found in these words: "The day of grace, during which God's mercies are extended to all in Christ, is with us yet."[61]

The Second Coming of Christ

Christian theology has been consistently concerned with eschatology. The ideals of righteousness which have been taught, the awareness of the difficulty (if not impossibility) in achieving these ideals, and an acute awareness of the overpowering reality of sin in the world have combined to make Christians look to an end of the age when God's triumph would be complete. The hope of the second coming of Christ is at least as old as the epistles of Paul. Various forms and combinations of forms of this doctrine are taught by fundamentalists (and it has been the occasion of division among them), but some form of the concept of the second coming is common to them all. For some, it is the antidote for an extreme form of pessimism. For others it is simply a Biblical truth. The best description of the relation of the doctrine of the premillennial second coming to the missionary enterprise has been made by Harold Lindsell. His contribution was discussed in Chapter VII of this study, "The Motive for Christian Missions."

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 383.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 388.

Evaluation

Two periods of the fundamentalist movement have been noted: the period of the controversy and the period of the revitalization of fundamentalism in the past decade. The real strength of fundamentalism is found in the degree to which it embodies historic Christianity, especially as it has been interpreted by the primary Reformers. Unfortunately, the real spiritual heritage of fundamentalism is found in the legalism of the secondary reformers, whose spiritual energies were drained in their fight for existence. In the modern fight for the preservation of essential Christianity, fundamentalism has understated the Christian faith by its overemphasis upon five points: the inerrant Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the second coming of Jesus. An overemphasis upon a non-comprehensive concept or group of concepts results in a distortion of perspective in viewing Christian thought as a whole. Fundamentalism has failed at this point. This failure has its root in the intensity of the controversy in which it has engaged. An additional failure must be laid to their charge: a legalistic interpretation of these doctrines, each of which might have a significant message for modern man. In fairness, it must be said that a decided tendency to overcome legalism can be found in the leading fundamentalists of the past decade.

Having established the five fundamentals of the Christian faith, the fundamentalists made the acceptance of these doctrines, precisely stated, a condition of fellowship. The resulting break in Christian fellowship was more serious to the Christian faith than was the supposed or real threat to essential Christianity by modernism and liberalism. This rupture of fellowship extended even to the mission fields where missionaries drew lines against each other, and the poison of suspicion was poured into the wells of comradeship in the task of proclaiming the Christian message to the non-Christian world. Fundamentalists were not solely responsible for the destruction of fellowship, of course, but their guilt is real.

Fundamentalists have shown a tendency to divide among themselves over minor issues, and thus have weakened the witness which fundamentalism might have borne to the message of redemption when liberalism was proclaiming the self-sufficiency of man.

Fundamentalism has had an answer for man's need of certainty -- a need which has been intensified by the insecurity of a period of tremendous change and unrest. An infallible holy book, a certain faith and a certain hope of salvation have been offered to meet the predicament of modern man. Increasingly fundamentalists have shown an ability to grasp the intellectual issues of faith and to deal with them in the light of their own presuppositions. They have also demonstrated the ability to examine their presuppositions in the light of the modern world-view. The scholars who have thus come to grips with these issues are finding places of service in the conservative seminaries. Through their work and influence revitalized fundamentalism should become a constructive voice in the witness of world Christianity.

Contemporary controversial fundamentalism is still active. No description has been given of it as a movement, because no significant change has been made between it and the fundamentalism of the controversy of 1918-1931. The objectives have been changed. The fight now aims at the destruction of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and of anyone connected with it.

The Impact of Fundamentalism on Missions

The modern Protestant missionary movement began at a time when the presuppositions of modern fundamentalism at its best were generally accepted in Protestantism. The world, however, has changed radically. The modern approach to religion has exhibited a willingness to change basic religious concepts in the light of the findings of the modern sciences.[62] The conservative approach has been based on the belief that the concepts of religion are unchangeable, but that methods may be changed to meet new situations.

Fundamentalism, representing the conservative approach, has sought to maintain in the twentieth century the basic theological concepts which motivated and sustained the missionary enterprise in the nineteenth century. The real point of Professor William Ernest Hocking's criticisms of the missionary enterprise were directed against this approach, which he considered to be inadequate.[63] The presuppositions of fundamentalist missionary theology require what Dr. Hocking called "The Way of Radical Displacement."

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[62] The term "modern sciences" includes physical and social sciences.

[63] Cf. Wm. Ernest Hocking, Living Religions and a World Faith (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), pp. 143-176. His description of "The Way of Radical Displacement" is apparently a description of fundamentalism, and his criticisms reveal what he feels to be the inadequacy of this approach under modern conditions. He included the neo-orthodox position in his criticisms.

The presuppositions which Dr. Hocking considered would require the missionary goal of the radical displacement of non-Christian religions by Christianity are summarized in the following quotation:

> If we presuppose (1) that there is a special revelation, an explicit word of God to certain persons; (2) that this word reveals what could never otherwise be known, a particular act of God's will announcing a plan of salvation, which is therefore the only way to be saved; (3) that the alternative is eternal punishment or eternal death for all those who do not take this way; and (4) that God has referred to us as human messengers the task of warning mankind of its danger and of its one way of escape -- thus shifting to our shoulders partial responsibility for the damnation of all who are damned from now on -- then, for those who accept this responsibility there is but one thing to do.[64]

None of these principles was denied or altered appreciably by Harold Lindsell in his A Christian Philosophy of Missions; rather, they have been reaffirmed.[65] In more recent publications by Dr. Lindsell, no change is observable in his position, though there is a modification in his earlier vigorous condemnation of contradictory positions.[66] Harold R.

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[64] Ibid., pp. 143-144.

[65] A review of Dr. Lindsell's work can be found in the discussions in this study on "The Motive of Christian Missions" and "The Theological Basis for the Missionary Message." Dr. Lindsell is regarded by the writer as the chief spokesman for fundamentalism on the subject of missions.

[66] Cf. Harold Lindsell and Charles Woodbridge, A

Cook in his An Introduction to the Study of Christian Missions has not questioned any of the four presuppositions set forth by Dr. Hocking.[67] Robert Hall Glover in his The Bible Basis of Missions has affirmed each of these four presuppositions.[68] It may be safely assumed that modern fundamentalism has not changed its basic objective to displace all other religions and that the presuppositions required by this objective of nineteenth century missions have been accepted by modern fundamentalism.[69]

Of the "way of displacement" and, therefore, of the fundamentalist theology of missions, Professor Hocking has said:

> This policy is rigorous, and has aspects of severity, but this does not alter its necessity on the premises stated. And it has great

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Handbook of Christian Truth (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953), and Harold Lindsell, Missionary Principles and Practice (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1955).

[67] Harold R. Cook, An Introduction to the Study of Christian Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), pp. 256.

[68] Robert Hall Glover, The Bible Basis of Missions (Los Angeles: The Bible House of Los Angeles, 1946), pp. 208.

[69] It is not to be assumed that each of the authors mentioned in this paragraph have examined the position stated by Professor Hocking and evaluated it. The books mentioned have been read with the purpose to determine whether they represent the fundamentalist position, which is taken to include the point set forth by Professor Hocking.

> great advantages, both in pedagogy, and in emotional economy. It has the pedagogical advantage of single-minded simplicity of programme. It creates an intelligible issue, and calls out all the energies of the will.[70]

The "way of displacement" has been criticized by Professor Hocking on two bases: (1) the practical and ethical difficulties created on mission fields, and (2) the inadequacy of the presuppositions. The first basis of criticism is not actually determinative of a theology of missions, since fundamentalists have been concerned with the same problems and have advocated some of the same reforms.[71] The real criticism of a fundamentalistic theology of missions is dependent on the establishment of a naturalistic world view, or on the discovery of a more adequate religious authority than that provided by the inerrant Bible. Fundamentalism needs to face seriously the results of a study of non-Christian religions. The questions created by a genuine study of non-Christian religions need to be dealt with more constructively than can be done by the quotation of Scripture texts.

In conclusion, a word of appreciation needs to be said for the evangelistic zeal with which fundamentalists have engaged in the missionary enterprise, and a word of admiration needs to be spoken for the certainty with which they believe in the absolute and final salvation which Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, has brought to the world. Fundamentalism never has to place the word unique in quotation marks when it is used to describe the Christian faith.

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[70] Hocking, op. cit., p. 145.

[71] Cf. Lindsell, Missionary Practices and Principles, Chapters XV and XVI, pp. 277-313. Dr. Lindsell has not agreed that methods such as education and medicine should be employed outside the evangelistic context.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

American theology has been characterized by change during the period covered in this study. Two types of theology have manifested a keen interest in the Christian missionary enterprise: liberalism and fundamentalism. A chapter has been devoted to a description and analysis of each position in its relation to the theological basis of Christian missions. A more distinct differentiation could have been made between fundamentalism and the traditional theology of American denominations, but the differentiation would not be significant in a study of the theological basis of missions. It will be noted that fundamentalism has been interpreted in the light of its strongest position, rather than the more vulnerable position of controversial fundamentalism. Throughout the body of the study, more space has been devoted to a description of the variety of opinions within liberalism than to fundamentalism, because liberalism has occupied a larger place in American theology.

Two constructive positions in American theology have also received attention. The massive theology of Paul Tillich, combining the philosophical and revelational approaches, has manifested an interest in its relevance to Christian missions. The post-critical theology of Nels F. S. Ferré, using the concept of agape as the basic principle of explanation, has also been directed toward the problems of missionary theology.

Neo-orthodoxy is noticeably absent from the theological perspectives presented in this study. The original plan of the study called for a chapter on neo-orthodoxy, but the results of the research did not justify it. If a study were made of the missionary content of all contemporary theology, neo-orthodoxy would probably occupy a large place. The only theology of missions written from the neo-orthodox perspective, which has been widely read in America, has been The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World by Hendrik Kraemer, the Dutch theologian.[1] This book was prepared for the pre-conference study of the delegates to the Madras Conference, 1938, and, as has been noted, did not win American disciples.[2]

American theologians who have been most greatly influenced by neo-orthodoxy have not applied the logic of their position to the problems involved in the missionary enterprise. ~~If the position of Karl Barth is taken as normative~~ for neo-orthodoxy, then no major American theologian is neo-orthodox. Reinhold Niebuhr has been the channel through which neo-orthodoxy has received its most forceful expression in American theology. It is to be noted also that the works of Emil Brunner have been much more widely read in America than have the works of Karl Barth. This has been due to the larger number of his books that have been translated into English and to his personal appearances in the United States.

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[1] Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (New York: Harper & Brothers). Published for the International Missionary Council, 1938.

[2] The influence of Dr. Kraemer contributed to the modification of the views of some Americans, as has been noted in the case of Walter Marshall Horton.

The issues involved in the differences between Karl Barth and American theologians whom he has most greatly influenced can be described in four words: immanence, transcendence, continuity, and discontinuity. American theologians have sought to make the concept of God more meaningful to the life of man and his history than is possible with the completely transcendent "totally other" concept of God taught by Karl Barth.

The elements in the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr which seem to be pertinent to a theology of missions based on his thought are his doctrine of the sinful nature of man, which requires a meaningful doctrine of justification by faith, and his philosophy of history, which regards the Kingdom of God as realizable only beyond history.

The conclusion of this study regarding neo-orthodoxy is that the neo-orthodox impact on missionary theology can be found largely in the degree in which it has influenced the changes that have taken place in liberalism.

This study began with the date of the publication of Re-thinking Missions. The second chapter has been devoted to an analysis of its theological basis and a review of the reaction to the report. Has this attempt to reorient the theology of missions been successful? It has been pointed out that the theology of Re-thinking Missions was rejected by missionary boards and societies. The nature of the theological challenge of Re-thinking Missions was such that it had to be considered seriously by every one concerned with the missionary enterprise. It also attracted the attention of many who were not particularly interested in missions, but who were interested in the theological position which it represented. The value of Re-thinking Missions for missionary theology lies in its statement for the case of an enlarged concept of missionary theory. The older concept which found an adequate basis for missionary motive in Biblical command and which refused to see any truth in non-Christian religions was found to be totally inadequate. For the most part, missionary boards and societies had already come to this conclusion, but they were not willing to accept the limitations on Christian expansion which the acceptance of Re-thinking Missions would have required.

A review of the articles appearing in the scholarly journals has indicated a wide acceptance of the implications of Re-thinking Missions by liberals who were not especially concerned for Christian missions. This group has moved in the direction of accepting truths in non-Christian religions on the same basis that truths in Christianity are accepted. At this vital point, either Re-thinking Missions has had a wider influence than at first thought, or it has stated what has turned out to be the conclusions of a large number of American theologians.

What the Christian attitude should be toward non-Christian religions continues to pose one of the most difficult problems in missionary theology. Many Christians have, of course, come to conclusions which are satisfactory to them, but no one seems to have presented a solution which preserves a true sense of the uniqueness of the Christian faith and at the same time has been true to an adequate understanding of the great non-Christian faiths.

One of the most hopeful signs of the contemporary situation is the rise of the ecumenical movement. One of the important phases of this movement is the re-awakened interest in the Church Universal. Equally hopeful is the recognition of the missionary obligation of the Church. The long standing separation of the missionary movement from the Church should soon end in a fruitful reunion.

Progress toward an ecumenical theology should be progress toward missionary theology. There is a pressing need for several persons possessed with ecumenical hope, but representing different theological perspectives to write theologies of Christian missions. Needed is an understanding of the apostolic nature of the Christian faith comprehensive enough to challenge every theological perspective with its imperative.

This study closes with this final observation. Those who are concerned for the missionary outreach of the Christian faith need the patience of a historical perspective. Impatience has been often expressed with the lack of progress of Christian missions in Asia in the century and a half of modern Protestant missionary effort. It should be remembered that it took a thousand years to include all of northern Europe in Christendom. On the other hand, there needs to be the impatience of the Christian imperative which allows no Christian to rest until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."[3]

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[3] Revelation 11:15.

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